



BABU KUAR SINGH

UNREST
AGAINST BRITISH RULE
IN BIHAR, 1831-1859

Edited by

DR. K. K. DATTA, M.A., Ph.D.

*Head of the Department of History
Patna University*

*Prepared in the State Central Records Office
Political Department, Bihar, Patna*



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Bihar's role in the history of India's successful struggle for freedom has been highly significant and inspiring. No doubt, the verdict of Plassey (23rd June, 1757) was in favour of the English East India Company. But their rising supremacy was challenged in the course of a few years on the soil of Bihar first by Mir Qasim alone (1762-63) and again in 1764 by a confederacy of three allies, Mir Qasim, Shujaud-aulah, the Nawab of Oudh, and emperor Shah Alam II of Delhi. Conjunction of some favourable circumstances enabled the English to overpower the allied powers, and Buxar supplemented the work of Plassey.

For a century after this, the expansion of the British dominion in India, and the growth of an Indo-British administrative system, naturally conducted India through manifold processes of transition—political, economic, social and cultural. This, for various reasons, generated fumes of discontent of which there were occasionally open manifestations in anti-British outbreaks in different parts of this vast country including Bihar. After the treaty of 21st January, 1798, between John Shore, the English Company's Governor-General and Saadat Ali of Oudh, Wazir, who was sent to live as a pensioner there, being discontented with his lot, organised an all-India conspiracy against the English. Wazir Ali had his confederates in Bihar, the most prominent of them being Raja Mitrajit Singh of Tikari. In 1831-32 there was a rising of the Coles in Chotanagpur. More

formidable than this was the movement led by the highly excited Santals in 1855-57 in a wide area extending from the vicinity of Burdwan to Bhagalpur. Its causes were deeply rooted in the changing conditions of that period and its suppression caused great strain to the Company's government. In the city of Patna itself in 1845-46 there was a plot for revolt against the English. It is well known that this city was an important centre of the Wahabi movement of the mid-nineteenth century.

There is no doubt that during the period of one century preceding 1857, marked by the rapid stride of British imperialism in India, which brought in its wake changes in other spheres of life there were several elements of discontent against British rule, all of which being focussed into one lens produced the fierce flame of 1857-59. Hedyat Ali Khan, then a Subedar and Sirdar Bahadur in the Bengal Sikh Police Battalion commanded by Captain T. Rattray writes in a contemporary unpublished account of the mutiny, dated August, 1858, "All the abovementioned facts, viz., the carrying of the army into Cabool (Kabul), the erection of the hospital at Saharaunpur, the issue of the order that all the sick men or women whether high or low caste should resort for treatment to this hospital, the swearing in of recruits to go wherever they were ordered, the messing together in jails, the cutting of beards of prisoners, and also of the sepoy's in a prescribed fashion, the annexation of Oudh, the observation of the Missionaries, the introduction of the rifle, and further the confiscation of the Jageers that had been granted for perpetuity by the Emperors of Delhi, the introduction of house-tax, and the sepoy's being required to pay postage for their letters, which formerly they were not required to pay, all these facts combined together and set the whole army

and the country mad." The movement of 1857-59 was indeed a gigantic and widespread challenge to British authority in this country. Lord Cromer significantly observed : "I wish the young generation of the English world read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the history of the Indian Mutiny ; it abounds in lessons and warnings".

There were feelings of discontent and disaffection among different sections of the people in India against British imperialism due to political, economic and sentimental grounds. To some it meant displacement from positions of authority, to others territorial or other economic losses and to those who were of conservative outlook it appeared to be responsible for encroachment on their old religious beliefs and practices. About Bihar, Mr. William Tayler, then Commissioner of Patna, felt that "there was a deep and growing dissatisfaction and excitement throughout Bihar, particularly among the Mohammedans arising from the suspicions which several measures of Bengal Government, and especially those connected with education, were contemplated".

There were sparks of the great conflagration in all quarters of Bihar which was justly considered by the Company's government to be an important administrative area. Sir Frederick J. Halliday, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, observed in his minute on the Mutinies in the lower provinces under the Government of Bengal, dated 30th September, 1858 : "It will readily be understood that on the outbreak of disaffection in the North-West, I became more than ordinarily anxious for the province of Bihar, bordering as it does on the actively disturbed parts of the country, more than one of its districts supplying soldiers for the army the town of Patna itself rightly

or wrongly supposed to be the hot bed of Muhammadan conspiracies, and of course at this time an object of more than usual suspicion.....Added to all this was the importance of the province politically as well as financially, almost every district touching the Ganges, and the Grand Trunk Road running through a large portion of the division, so that anything happening to endanger the safety of the province would, at the same time, have cut off the two great highways to the Upper Provinces, and again, in financial point of view, its immense opium-cultivation, the quantity of manufactured or partially manufactured opium in the godowns at Patna, the large and scattered treasuries almost unprotected, and to crown all, except at Dinapore, where their presence was absolutely necessary as a check on the native regiments, not a European soldier throughout the whole division."

So far as Bihar is concerned, it was at Rohini (a village in the Deoghur Subdivision of the district of Santhal Parganas), headquarters of the 5th Irregular Cavalry under Major MacDonald, that there was the first open manifestation of this movement in the evening of the 12th June, 1857. It was suppressed by Major MacDonald and those who took leading part in it were hanged.

But the movement soon took a formidable shape at Patna where the feelings of the Indian against the Company's Government had been very much strained for diverse reasons. Its Commissioner, Mr. William Tayler, had been closely watching its course since the Meerut outbreak of May, 1857, and had even taken some precautionary steps by apprehending a rising at Patna particularly because of the proximity of the Military divisional headquarters of Dinapore, which under the

charge of Major General Llyod was then "garrisoned by three Native Infantry Regiments, the 7th, 8th and 40th, by one Company of European and one of Native Artillery, and by Her Majesty's 10th Foot." At the end of the month of June, 1857 "chronic alarm of the Europeans", as Kaye observes, "culminated in an acute paroxysm of panic".

Mr. Tayler advised the Civil Officers at the chief outstations of the Patna Division (Chapra, Arrah, Muzaffarpur, Gaya and Motihari) to be stern in suppressing anti-British outbreaks and himself adopted some highly repressive measures against the Wahabai leaders of Behar whom he suspected to have organised a conspiracy against the British Government in India. He took recourse to a highly dishonourable device to arrest three influential Maulavis of Patna, named Muhammad Hussain, Ahmad Ullah, Waizul Huq. On the 19th June they were invited by the Commissioner to his place along with the other respectable residents of the city of Patna "for consultation on the state of affairs". When after some conversation, others left the place, these three were kept under arrest. "To this day", wrote Mr. Tayler a year afterwards, "I look at the detention of these men as one of the most successful strokes of policy which I was able to carry into execution." But it was beyond doubt a treacherous conduct on his part which has been justly censured by some English writers. Kaye writes : "To invite men to a friendly conference and when actually the guests of a British Officer, to seize their persons, is not only very like treachery, but is treachery itself. If these little shrivelled men had resisted, they would, perhaps, have been cut down ; and if they had been, a Muhammadan historian would, doubtless, have described the successful policy of Commissioner Tayler in language similar to that in which I described the

treacherous assassination of Sir William Macnaghten by Sirdar Muhammad Akbar Khan. The exigencies of a great orisis justify exceptional acts in the interests of the national safety, but I do not know any excuses that may be pleaded or arguments that may be advanced by a British Officer in such a case, that might not, and doubtless have been pleaded and advanced by native chiefs in like circumstances, and freely echoed by the popular voice." Forrest considers it to be a matter of regret that the "mode of arrest was not more in accordance with faith and honour".

This was not the end of Tayler's repression. He soon adopted some other severe measures to overawe the citizens of Patna. Maulavi Mehdi, the patrolling Magistrate of the city, was arrested on suspicion of "connivance with the disaffected". On the 20th June, Tayler issued a proclamation demanding surrender of arms by all the citizens within twenty-four hours and another forbidding all citizens to leave their homes after 9 P.M. with exceptions in certain cases.

But intimidation could not kill the urge of the disaffected people to remove alien rule and government from their country. There was a furious rising at Patna on the 3rd July, suppression of which did not prove to be an easy task on the part of the executive of the Company's Government there though they used all the resources of their authority. Some of the regiments at Dinapore also rose against the Company on the 25th July and started for Arrah. At Sugauli (in the Motihari district), four soldiers of the 12th Irregular Cavalry killed its commander Major Holmes and his wife in the evening of the same day.

It was in the district of Shahabad that there was a well organised challenge to British authority under the able leadership of the brave Rajput chief Kuar Singh

of Jagdishpur whose chivalrous exploits form a highly exciting tale. Undaunted by heavy odds this octogenarian leader gathered round him a band of faithful fighters and inspired them with tremendous zeal and bravery. In his stronghold at Jagdishpur he had established a manufactory of arms and ammunition and had stored provisions to feed an army of 20,000 men for six months.

I find in an unpublished letter from A. R. Young, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated the 20th March, 1858 that the leading compatriots of Kuar Singh were his brother Amar Singh, his nephew, Ritbhanjan Singh, his friend Nishan Singh and his *tehsildar* Harkishen Singh. In alliance with those sepoys, who had marched from Dinapore to Arrah on the 27th July, Kuar Singh's party besieged the English at Arrah and reduced them to a critical state. A body of European and Sikh soldiers sent from Dinapore under Captain Dunbar for the relief of the beleaguered English garrison there had to own defeat on the 30th July and those who survived retreated in utter frustration. But for assistance from an unexpected quarter the defeat of the English would have been final. Vincent Eyre, a major of the Bengal artillery, then steaming off the Ganges on his way to Allahabad marched towards Arrah. After a severe engagement with Kuar Singh's forces at Bibiganj on the 2nd August, he reached Arrah on the 3rd August and relieved the besieged garrison. The sepoys took up their position at Jagdishpur. Eyre disarmed the people of Arrah and executed those whom he considered to be enemies of the English. Reinforced by 200 men of the 10th Foot, and 100 of Captain Rattray's Shikhs, Eyre commenced his march towards Jagdishpur on the 11th August. After some fighting in the jungle

fastness, Eyre captured Jagdishpur and not only destroyed all the munition of war that he could not carry with him but also undermined all the important buildings. "All the principal buildings within Kuar Singh's premises were", writes Kaye, "soon heaps of blackened ruins ; and a Hindoo temple on the Raja's estate shared the fate of the other edifices". Such was the vandalism of Eyre !

Instead of making immediate attempt to retrieve his lost position, the Rajput Chief went to different places in U. P., not indeed as a fugitive but continued to fight there also by greatly harassing the English troops in those localities. There are copious references in some unpublished contemporary records, which I recently studied, regarding his movements since he left Jagdishpur, particularly his fight at Azimgarh against the British troops under Brigadier Douglas (April 17 to April 21). Losing one arm and wounded in thigh in the course of fighting, Kuar Singh with his remarkable courage, patience and skill recrossed the Ganges on the 21st April and proceeded to Shahabad. It should be noted that he had behind him the support and sympathy of many during his stay in U. P. not to speak of the people in his own area. A British force sent against him under Captain Le Grand suffered a severe repulse on the 23rd April. After his death which occurred shortly afterwards, his followers continued the struggle under the determined leadership of his brother Amar Singh till the month of November, 1858 by defying all the efforts of British Officers like Lugard, his successor Douglas and Sir Henry Havelock who even employed mounted infantry armed with Enfield Rifles. Pressed heavily from two sides and driven into the Kaimur hills, which bounded the south-west of the Shahabad District, the followers of Amar Singh were suddenly

attacked by the troops of Douglas in the night of the 24th November, 1858, while they were resting round their camp fires, and many of them were shot in the struggle that ensued. Though this action on the part of the British troops was not, as Forrest notes, "any great victory", yet it marked the termination of the first phase of India's attempt for liberation from British yoke. In other parts of Bihar, such as Bhagalpur, Baunsi, Rohini, Purnea, and Chotanagpur, the movement was suppressed by British about the same time. It left, however, bitter memories in the minds of many of the Indians an account of whose feelings and sentiments till the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 is yet to be written. Let us hope that this gap would be filled in when a comprehensive history of India's freedom movement, as contemplated by the Government of India, is written through the honest efforts of bands of scholars in our country.

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CHAPTER II

THE KOL INSURRECTION OF 1831-33 IN CHHOTANAGPUR

Although the Chhotanagpur region passed under British rule as early as 1765, effective British control could not be established over this area till long afterwards. In 1816-17 the magisterial powers of the Maharaja of Chhotanagpur were finally taken away, and following a general rising of Lurka Kols in Singhbhum and Tamar two years later, direct administration under Magistrate and Collector was firmly established. The introduction of direct rule by the British which brought in its trail the 'Regulation' system, caused immense hardships to the indigenous population who consequently hated foreign rule. "Up to 1831, when the most serious revolt of the Kols of Chhotanagpur occurred, there can be no doubt that the changes of Government which had taken place were not beneficial to them. They were neglected by their new masters, oppressed by aliens, and deprived of the means they had formerly possessed of obtaining redress through their own chief." [1]

Tracing the causes of this general rising the Joint Commissioners, Messrs. Wilkinson and Dent appointed for the suppression of the movement, mention in their report, "The Kols throughout Nagpur had within the last few years had their rents increased by their *elagadars*, *zamindars* and *thiccadars* 35 per cent. They had made the roads throughout the *parganas* without payment, as *beggaries* (forced

[1] *Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Bengal (Lohardagga)*, p. 350.

labour). The *mahajans* who advanced money and grains managed within a twelve month to get from them 70 per cent, and sometimes more. They disliked the tax upon liquor, which was fixed at four annas per house, but more than that amount was levied very generally, besides a rupee *salami* on almost every village and a *khasi* or goat.... The Kols were averse to undertake the cultivation of poppy, and we find a great disinclination on the part of other classes to carry it on. The *Thana* establishments were also complained of, and a *Dak* establishment was kept up, the expense of which fell upon the Kols of those villages which were situated on the lines of road traversed by the *dak*. Many people from below the *ghat* have settled in Nagpur and it was one of the subjects of complaint amongst the Kols that within the last five years several of these settlers, to whom they had become deeply indebted, had pressed so hard for payment that many of the Kols had executed *Sewak-pattas*, that is, had sold their services till the debt was discharged, which was in fact binding themselves to give their whole earning to the creditor, thus becoming his bondsman for life. The complaints against the *thana amlas* were loud in our progress through the country.... The *Mahtos*, *Pahans*, or *Elaqadars* of villages were required annually to register the names of the *Kotwals* and *Goraitis* of their respective villages, on which occasion the *Darogas* of *thanas* were in the habit of taking one rupee or more according to the size of the village under the denomination of *Kotwali* or *Gorait Likhai*.... We have further received a statement tending directly to implicate the Raja's brother and the *Kuars* of Basia and Govindpur as the planners of the insurrection; but no proof of this exists, and, though the story is plausibly enough got up, it is in our opinion by no means a probable one, notwithstanding there being some facts on which it is

founded.... There are some circumstances in the conduct of the Raja of Nagpur and the *Kuar* of Basia which give the story an appearance of truth.... There are reasons why the Raja should wish to get rid of our influence.”^[1] It is significant that in Singhbhum also, where the revolt had taken no less formidable a shape, Raja Achet Singh and his Diwan were charged of inciting the Lurka Kols.^[2] In Manbhum, which was the 1st to rise up, the Bhumij Kols were led by Ganganarain Singh, a scion of Burrabhum Raj family joined by many of the *Kuars* and *Zamindars* of that area.^[3] In Palamau, the Kharwars and Cheroes rose and fought under their own chiefs.^[4]

In fact, the whole of Chhotanagpur (which then comprised the district of Ramgarh, and parts of Jungle Mehal, Midnapur and Tributary States) had been seething with discontent against the British rule. Its consolidation in this region had resulted not only in the Political dependence and social degradation of a manly race as the children of the soils of Chhotanagpur were, but had actually been threatening them with total economic ruin. That is why the movement of 1831-33 was joined by different sections of people and its influence was felt in almost all parts of the Chhotanagpur plateau.

“The Kol insurrection of 1831, though no doubt only the bursting forth of a fire that had long been smouldering”^[5] was fanned into flame by the following episode. Twelve villages belonging to Sinhrai *Manki*

[1] Special Commissioner's Report quoted in Ranchi Settlement Report by J. Reid.

[2] *Ibid.*, and Wilkinson's letter, dated 1st March 1833, to the Government of Bengal.

[3] Dent's Report, dated 4th September 1833.

[4] Ramgarh Magistrate's Report, dated 15th March 1832.

[5] *Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Bengal (Lohardagga)*, p. 451.

of Ichagutu in Sonepur *pargana* of Ranchi district were given out in farm to certain outsiders who not only dispossessed the *Manki* but also 'seduced or ravished two of his young sisters'. [1] A similar complaint was made against a farmer of Bondgaon in Singhbhum who had acted 'very oppressively towards a *munda* of Bondgaon who had abducted and dishonoured the *munda's* wife'. [2] The distressed people having been denied justice at the hands of those to whom it concerned, invited all the Kols of Sonepur, Tamar and Bandgaon to assemble at the village of Lunkah in Tamar. It was decided that the dishonours and injustice inflicted on them would no longer be tolerated. They would at once 'commence to burn, plunder, murder and eat'. [3] This was no vain threat. They thought, as one of them deposed before the Speical Commissioner as reported in their despatch of the 12th February 1832, ".....committing such outrages our grievances would come to light, and if we had any master, notice would be taken of them and justice rendered". "In the meantime arrows of war were being circulated through the country like the fiery cross" [4] and by the middle of January, 1832, the Mundaries and Uraons had entered with zeal into the spirit of insurrection "which developed into a national crusade, with the avowed object of getting rid of the horde of foreigners".

There were no troops available in the district and the *zamindars* sought safety in flight. The insurgents were reinforced by a force of Lurka Kols from Singhbhum, who joined the movement with the greatest

[1] Special Commissioner's Report, dated 12th February 1832.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Bengal (Lohardagga)*, p. 452.

zeal. The result was that the whole country for the time being lay at their mercy. The plan they pursued was to send intimation in advance to the Kols of the villages they proposed to attack directing them to warn the rich people there of the intended invasion, so that they might evacuate and escape bloodshed. This would be followed by the invasion in which the local Kols joining the invaders would also participate thus swelling the bands of revolutionaries from village to village as they passed.[¹]

Troops were immediately rushed to quell the rebellion from all directions, from Calcutta, Dinapur, Banaras, Sambhalpur and Nagpur, but it was not till the middle of February, 1832 that they were able to take offensive on a large scale.[²] Earlier, in the beginning of January 1832, the *Nazir* of Sherghati (Headquarters of zilla Ramgarh) court had sent to the Kols the message that, "if they would desist from disturbing the peace of the country, their lands would be restored to them". To this they had replied that 'they would attend to no orders but those that emanated from the Maharaja of Chutianagpur'. [³] Captain Wilkinson reached Pithaurea, on the brink of the northern face of the plateau, about the middle of January, but he could not dare penetrate far into the disturbed district for want of sufficient force. He, however, succeeded in compelling the villages near Pithaurea to submit, but "this was not done without fighting and, indeed the insurgents, on more than one occasion threatened his position, advancing against it with a force estimated about 3,000 fighting men". The

[¹] D. J. Reid, *Ranchi Settlement Report*, p. 23.

[²] *Ranchi Commissioner's Miscellaneous Receipts and Despatches*, 1831-32.

[³] *Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Bengal (Lohardagga)* p. 452.

insurgents at Nagri between Ranchi and Pithaurea, had an avowed determination to fight to the last, but an expedition was sent by the British specially against them with the unequivocal instruction, "attack, slay and destroy," and to such order energetically carried out with the habitual vandalism of British soldiers in Eastern country, the Nagri heroes speedily succumbed. Forty years later when Hunter wrote his Statistical Account, songs were still sung in village Nagri reminding how their fathers 'went out' in 1832. [1] The subjugation of Nagri was followed by the submission of most of the northern villages, but the Uraons of the west and Mundaries of the Eastern and southern parts showed no inclination to lay down their arms. The insurrection soon spread to Palamau, where it was taken up by the Kharwars with equal zeal. A squadron of cavalry of British troops supported by native *Burkandazes* while trying to penetrate into Chutianagpur through Palamau was fiercely charged at Chetma, one of the hill passes on 21st February, 1833 and ultimately repulsed, by the Palamau insurgents. The British army had to evacuate Lesliganj after this defeat, and retired to Menathoo to wait for reinforcements.

General offensive of the British troops started from the middle of February. Three flying columns were formed which kept the country from north to south. The right and the centre columns met with slight opposition, but the left column, when it reached Sonapur found that the Kols had abandoned their villages and with their families retreated to the hills. In attempting to dislodge them the British troops suffered serious losses. [2] The columns, however, now

[1] *Ibid.* p. 453.

[2] Ramgarh Magistrate's Report, dated 19th March 1832.

[3] *Hunter's Statistical Accounts of Bengal (Lohardagga)* p. 454.

concentrated to the south. "Bindrai Manki, Singrai's brother, and Surga, the heroes of the movement held to the last, but on the 19th March, 1832, these leaders also surrendered to the Commissioners."

While the Government had scarcely recovered from the shock of this insurrection, the Kols of Manbhum (Burrabhum, Patcoom, etc.) and Singhbhum (Dalbhum) also broke out in open arms under the leadership of Ganganarain Singh, a scion of Burrabhum Raj family, and it is significant that Bindrai Manki, the leader of Movement in Chhotanagpur, who had been pardoned off by the Government, again became the leader of the movement in this region.^[1] The movement could not be suppressed till towards the end of the next year 1833. Ganga Narain Singh died fighting on February 1833 at Hindoo Sahie. Bindrai Manki was delivered to the Commissioner by whom he was sent to Hazaribagh jail to take his trial.

Thus the movement of 1831-33 was a widespread revolt of different sections of the *Adivasies* and others in Chotanagpur and the adjoining areas as a protest against the inequities resulting from the replacement of their indigenous system of administration by the rapidly growing authority of their British master. The immediate sequel to it was the withdrawal of the general regulations from these areas and the constitution of the non-regulation province of South West Frontier Agency, under regulation XIII of 1833, which 20 years later got the name of Chhotanagpur division.

[1] Wilkinson's letter to Government of Bengal, dated the 1st March 1833.

CHAPTER III

PATNA CONSPIRACY OF 1846

In 1845-46, when in course of the first Anglo-Sikh War the English were faced with a grave situation due to stubborn and formidable resistance of the Sikh Army, and "all the resources of the (Company's) Government" were being drawn to the North-Western Frontier there was a plan at Patna to assail and uproot their authority. William Tayler, Commissioner of Patna Division till August, 1857, thus, refers to it, "for some years past, this city (Patna) has been considered a very sink of disaffection and intrigue. In 1846, a dangerous plot was detected, in which many of the Mohamedans of Patna, and the neighbouring districts were concerned and in which attempts had been made to tamper with the sepoy.... That the conspiracy of 1846, was but a branch of a more general plot is the opinion of many who were well acquainted with the country, and that the object of that conspiracy was the destruction of the English, the overthrow of the British Government, and the re-establishment of a Mohamedan dynasty is, I imagine, beyond doubt." [1]

It is significant to note that Babu Kuar Singh of Jagdishpur, the great hero of 1857-58, was also suspected by the British of being involved in this anti-British plot of 1845-56. "I have received letters," communicated Mr. Elphinstone Jackson, Officiating Magistrate of Shahabad to Secretary to the Government of Bengal on the 3rd January, 1846, "containing the

[1] W. Tayler, *Our Crisis*, pp. 5.

information that Babu Koer Singh, a most influential Zamindar in this district and a man most highly popular with all the inhabitants of Arrah and other towns of Shahabad, is suspected of being leagued with the conspirators and that letters bearing his seal have been discovered clearly proving his guilt.”[1]

The conspiracy of 1845-46 was supported by many *Rajabs* and *Zamindars* of Bihar. An attempt was made to tamper with Regiment no. 1 under Major Roweroft then stationed at Dinapur. Munshi Rahat Ali was the principal person who managed through Shekh Peer Bux and Pandit Doorga Prasad, Munshi and Pandit respectively to plant mutiny in the Regiment. The Regiment was promised six months pay in advance, and a day was fixed for the rising. However, the conspiracy leaked out, and the Munshi and the Pandit of the Regiment were arrested and many letters from several *Zamindars* and influential men showing their connection with the plot were found in their possession. Munshi Rahat Ali and Khaja Hasan Ali Khan were arrested. The former was an influential *Zamindar* of village Neora, a relation of late Sir Ali Imam and the grandfather of M. Zainneddin, ex-principal of Patna Law College. Hasan Ali was the grandfather of Justice Khwaja Mohammad Noor. These persons were later released in the absence of sufficient evidence and Baboo Koer Singh was not arrested on political ground, the Bengal Government apprehending that this might have the effect of exciting the people to opposition. This is significant that on the outbreak of 1857 movement in Bihar, the old records of 1845-46[2] Conspiracy were consulted by the then Government, and persons involved in the latter were strongly suspected.

[1] Patna Commissioner's office confidential file of 1846.

[2] These records are preserved in the State Central Records Office, Bihar.

CHAPTER IV

SANTHAL INSURRECTION, 1855—57

On the eastern skirts of Bihar, now represented by the district of the Santhal Parganas, there occurred a formidable insurrection of the Santhals in 1855—57. The Santhals had immigrated into this area from the regions now forming the Chhotanagpur Division of Bihar, and Bankura, Purulia and Midnapur districts of West Bengal during the later half of the 18th century and the early quarters of the 19th century, and settled in what came to be known as the Damini-Koh from 1832-33. The Santhals, largely through their own efforts, made this area fertile and inhabitable. For administrative purposes the area was under the civil control of its Superintendent, named Mr. Pontent since 1837; in criminal matters it was under the Magistrate of Bhagalpur. There was only our local magistrate in the area at Deoghar, and for justice the Santhals had to go a long way to the distant courts at Bhagalpur and other places where too it was not always certain because of the frauds practised on them by the court *Amlas*, *Mukhtars*, peons and *Barkandazes*.^[1]

The main causes of the Santhal Insurrection lay in the economic grievances of these people against their oppression and exploitation by the Bengali and up-country merchants and money-lenders who had flocked to Damini-Koh during recent years attracted by the facilities available there for their thriving business.^[2] These new settlers had amassed large fortunes at

[1] Dr. K. K. Datta, *The Santhal Insurrection*, page 4.

[2] C. E. Buckland : *Bengal under the Lieutenant-Governors*, page 12.

the cost of simple Santhals within an incredibly short time. They lent a few rupees, some rice or other articles to the Santhals and following a cunning and tortuous process within a short period 'became the arbiters of their fate and held in hand their destiny throughout life'.^[1]

Not only the Santhal rapidly lost all his lands to pay off the Mahajan's debts, but in numerous cases pledged his own person to work off the debt.^[2] What is most strange, 'this condition of rank slavery' was tolerated, nay sanctioned, by the courts of law.^[3]

The misfortune of the Santhals was further aggravated by the greediness of certain *zamindars* who coveted their lands, or would often lease Santhal villages to non-Santhals for money considerations. Further the police was corrupt and oppressive and usually a handsome bribe from the *mahajans* was more effective on the local *daroga* than the real distresses of the Santhal.

Mr. Pontent's harsh conduct towards the Santhals was also regarded by many as a cause of insurrection, but the Commissioner of Bhagalpur, G. F. Brown, very strongly defends his character in his letter to Special Commissioner, A. C. Bidwell, dated 1st October, 1855.^[4]

The Santhals to the south and west also shared the discontent of their brethren in Damini-Koh, and vague allusions were made to a Santhal Chief, named Morgoh Raja, living near Parasnath hills who, it was rumoured, was trying to form an independent

[1] Pakur Records quoted in Dr. K. K. Datt's *Santhal Insurrection*.

[2] Bradley-Birt: *The Story of an Indian Upland*, page 175.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Bhagalpur Commissioner's correspondence, Vol. no. 687 (1855).

Santhal Kingdom. Another story connected the insurrection with Meer Abbas Ali, ex-Amir of Sindh, who had recently come to Hazaribagh on a hunting excursion. It proved to have no foundation^[1].

The growing discontent among Santhals was fired into flames through the vigorous efforts of two Santhal brothers Sidhu and Kanhu of Bhagnadihi, who along with their two less pushing brothers Chand and Bhairab were the moving force in the entire movement. The two brothers were men of strong personal character, and they brooded over the wrongs of their race. They claimed to have seen apparitions of their *Thakur*, and to have been favoured with scraps of papers, which were distributed throughout the country. They also sent forth a 'Sal' tree branch to their brothers and others, as a sign to rouse the clans^[2]. On the 30th of June, 1855, 10,000 Santhals met at Bhagnadihi, where the divine order that the Santhals should get out of their oppressors' control was announced to them by Sidhu and Kanhu. It is said that the assemblage at Sidhu's directions addressed Government and all subordinate authorities. The Santhals declared their determination to do away with the Bengali and up-country *mahajans*, to "take possession of the country and set up a Government of their own."^[3]

They proceeded from Bhagnadihi to the neighbouring *bazar* at Panchkethia to worship a local goddess there, and thereafter started their adventure. Here, they killed 5 local *mahajans*, and when on the 7th July, 1855 the *daroga* of thana Dighu,* who had already

[1] Letter, dated the 17th December, 1855 from Chhotanagpur Commissioner to Government of Bengal.

[2] Buckland : Opp. Cit. page 12.

[3] Calcutta Review : 1856, quoted in Dr. K. K. Datta's Santhal Insurrection.

* Also called Borio *Bazar*.

made himself abnoxious to the Santhals due to his ill-treatment of a respectable Santhal last year, reached the place with his party, he was soon killed by Sidhu along with a few others (19 persons in all), and the rest of the police party fled. The insurgents next plundered Barhait *bazar*, which was then full of many rich *mahajans*, and thence marched in different directions with bows, poisoned arrows, axes and swords, in their hands.[¹]

The news of the outbreak reached Bhagalpur as early as the 4th July, but the 'report seemed so strange and unlikely that at first little credit was attached to it.'^[2] But when the report of Borio *thana* murder reached the Commissioner (Mr. G. F. Brown) on the afternoon of the 8th July he immediately requested Major F. W. Burrows to despatch a force to Rajmehal, 'the insurgents having given out that they intended to attack that place'. But on receiving informations the following morning that the insurgents after having plundered several villages between Borio and Colong, were moving in the direction of Bhagalpur as well as in that of Rajmehal, and that they had, in fact, arrived within 20 miles of latter place, he modified his former orders, and asked Major Burrows to arrange for sending a detachment to Rajmehal and also to be careful 'to reserve a force sufficient for the defence' of Bhagalpur, if necessary. Major Burrows, with 160 rank and file, marched for Rajmehal in the evening of the 10th July. He reached Colgong on the 11th but he could not dare to proceed further, hearing of a large number of insurgents in the neighbourhood scattered in small parties. On the same day, the Commissioner

[¹] Dr. K. K. Datta : S. I. page 19.

[²] Letter, dated the 9th July, 1858, from Commissioner, Bhagalpur, to Government of Bengal.

wrote to the Officer Commanding the troops at Dinapur to send additional troops "to aid Major Burrows in quelling the insurrection and for the protection" of Bhagalpur.

The insurgents had an encounter, on the 13th July, with 6 or 8 men of the Railway staff who were defeated, three of them being wounded. *Dak* and all Railway operations between Bhagalpur and Rajmehal had been stopped. The insurgents loudly boasted that the Company's rule was at an end and the regime of their *soobah* had commenced. [1] The headquarters of the entire 40th Regiment N. I. under Major Shuckburgh had started from Dinapur and was proceeding towards Bhagalpur on steamer.

The troops under Major Burrows were defeated in a fierce engagement with a body of armed Santhals near Pirpainti at about 2 P.M. on the 16th July, 1855. "The result was that the Quarter-Master-Sergeant, Mr. Braddon, some Native Officer, and about 25 sepoy were killed. The party then retired to Pyntee (Pirpainti) where they got on board boats and proceeded up towards Colgong." [2]

Major Shuckburgh arrived Bhagalpur on the 17th and immediately 200 men under command of Lt. Rubie on board the steamer 'Benares' were sent to Colgong. Further reinforcements were at the same time requisitioned from Dinapur and Calcutta. The insurrection having by that time "assumed all the characteristics of a rebellion" the Commissioner proclaimed martial law against the Santhals offering high rewards for the apprehension of the Insurgent Chiefs.

[1] Letter, dated the 17th July, 1855, from Commissioner, Bhagalpur, to Government of Bengal.

[2] Letter, dated the 17th July, 1855, from Commissioner, Bhagalpur, to Major General Lloyd, Dinapur.

For the Principal Chief Rs. 10,000, for each of the *dewans* Rs. 5,000 and for each of the minor chiefs of the *parganahs* Rs. 1,000.[¹] This proclamation of the Commissioner was annulled by the Government of Bengal and the rewards were reduced to half. Meanwhile further troops arrived from Dinapur and by the end of July Major-General Lloyd took upon himself the "disposition of troops".

Disturbances had spread to other quarters with great rapidity. In the Ambar *pargana* (Pakur Raj), the Santhal insurgents under Gocho Manjhi plundered Lakshipur, and then proceeding to Litipura made some plunder. Thence they proceeded to Hiranpur *bazar* and after plundering it went away to Mansinghpur where they were reinforced by some non-Sanths. After having next plundered Sangrampur, they reached Pakur and kept the place almost in a state of siege for 3 days and nights. On the 4th, i.e., the 12th July, 1855, Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairab entered the house of the Pakur *zamindar*. Rani Kshemsundari, the owner, had already left the palace with valuables. The Santhals looted what they found and killed whomsoever they got. After making further plunders they advanced towards the border of Murshidabad District. Mr. Toogood, Magistrate of Murshidabad, hearing of their advance took to the indigo factory of Mr. H. Maseyk at Dhulian whence he sent a party of 160 Barkandazes for the protection of the factory of his brother at Kadamsarai which had been attacked by the rebels. On the arrival of Barhampur troops the Santhals moved from Kadamsarai and, although pursued, plundered the palace of the Raja of Mahespur on the 15th. The troops of the 7th N.I.

[¹] Letter, dated the 18th July, 1855, from Commissioner, Bhagalpur, to Government of Bengal.

had an engagement with the Santhals, whom they defeated, Sidhu, Kanhu and Bhairab themselves shot but not mortally. Two unfortunate English ladies, Mrs. Thomas and Miss Pell, and three European gentlemen, Mr. Henshaw and his two sons were murdered by a party of the insurgents under guidance of Tirbhuvan Santhal, near Maharajpur.[¹] There are evidences that Sidhu and Kanhu did not support these murders. They even punished some of the culprits.

In Birbhum also the insurrection had become formidable. In fact by the 20th of July, the revolt had spread from Taldanga at the south-west of Birbhum on the G. T. Road to Bhagalpur and Rajmehal on the Ganges in the north-west. In order to prevent the advance of the Santhals to the south of the Damodar river and of the G. T. road, the Ramgarh Irregular Light Horse, the Governor-General's Body-guard, the 37th Regiment, 200 of the Nizamat troops with 30 elephants and 32 horses and subsequently the 63rd Regiment of N.I. had been put in motion. Several engagements with insurgents took place, the Government troops many times meeting with partial reverses, but by the 17th of August quiet was restored to this part of the country, though the rebels under arms were still estimated to exceed 30,000.[²]

SUPPRESSION OF THE MOVEMENT

The troops reached Burhait on the 24th July, and again beat the rebels at Raghunathpur. Soon afterwards Sidhu was given up to the Bhagalpur troops through treachery. Garrison posts were planted on the Murshidabad border, and no further trouble occurred

[¹] Dr. K. K. Datta : S. I. page 36.

[²] Buckland : Bengal under Lt. Governors, page 13.

in that quarter. The rainy season of the year was unsuited to the British troops for active operation against the rebels who had retired to the jungles. The Lt. Governor had been desirous of proclaiming martial law in August, but the Government of India under the influence of Sir Barnes Peacock and Sir J. P. Grant had refused permission. "A proclamation issued by the local Government inviting the rebels to surrender on terms was rejected by them and in some places treated with contempt."^[1] The proclamation had been issued by the Government of Bengal through Mr. A. C. Bidwell, Commissioner of Nadia, who had been appointed Special Commissioner for the suppression of insurrection in Santhal Parganas towards the beginning of August, while Mr. G. F. Brown, Commissioner of Bhagalpur, had incurred the displeasure of the Lt. Governor owing to his conduct in connection with the insurrection.^[2] Mr. Ashley Eden had been appointed Mr. Bidwell's first assistant with powers of a Joint Magistrate and Collector. Though the conduct of the military operations against the Santhal had been placed entirely in the hand of the military authorities, still the tactics of the military were to some extent subjected to civil control."^[3]

In September, the Santhal resumed active resistance in parts of Birbhum and Bhagalpur and martial law was proclaimed on the 10th November by Sir F. J. Halliday, Lt. Governor of Bengal, with consent of the Governor-General in Council, declaring that, "all persons who, after the date of this proclamation, shall be taken in arms in open hostility to the

[1] *Ibid*, page 14.

[2] Letter, dated the 10th August, 1855, from Commissioner, Bhagalpur, to Government of Bengal.

[3] Bengal under Lt. Governors, page 14.

(British Government) or shall be taken in the act of opposing by force of arms the authority of the same, or shall be taken in the actual commission of any overt act of rebellion against the State (within the disturbed districts) shall be tried by Court Martial. . . . and the sentence of such court will be liable under section 3, Regulation X of 1804, to the immediate punishment of death.”[¹]

The proclamation of martial law encouraged the troops stationed in different parts of the disturbed areas to proceed vigorously with the work of chastising the Santhal insurgents. They had no longer to suffer from the inclemency of the rainy season. A number of outposts, sometimes consisting of 12 to 14 thousand men, drove away the insurgents from the open country. Government then suspended the martial law on the 3rd January, 1856. But even after the suspension of martial law, certain parts of the country continued to remain disturbed for about three months more, and some commotion was felt also on Monghyr border and Khurruckdeeha *pargana* of Hazaribagh District, but this later proved to be of little consequence and hence towards the beginning of March the Lt. Governor found that it was no longer necessary to send any troops to Khurruckdeeha. All disturbances and panic soon subsided. Kanhu had been captured by the 3rd week of February, 1856, near Operbandhah [²], north-east of Jamtara, by the Sardar Ghatwal of Kujra, and was executed within a few days. A few other ring leaders also met the same fate. A large number was tried and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

[¹] Buckland: Bengal under Lt. Governors.

[²] Letter, dated the 20th February, 1856, from W. E. Taylor, to Secretary to Government of Bengal.

On pacification of the country, an enquiry was made into the grievances of the Santhal. The investigation was conducted by Mr. Ashley Eden (Later Lt-Governor of Bengal) specially deputed for the purpose. The result was the Act XXXVII of 1855 which formed the Santhal areas into a separate non-regulation district to be known by the general name of the Santhal Parganas. A Deputy Commissioner was placed in charge with four assistants under Commissioner of Bhagalpur as the Commissioner of the Santhal Parganas.

Thus the Santhal Insurrection, which remained for more than 6 months a dreadful menace to the Government, and caused terrible losses both in men and money besides seriously affecting the revenues of the State, made the Government of East India Company then engaged in consolidating its hold on India, realise the necessity of effective administration and proper defence of the areas covered by the Rajmehal Hills.

CHAPTER V

STATE OF PUBLIC FEELINGS IN BIHAR, 1855-56

The few years that immediately preceded the outbreak of 1857 Movement, i. e., the closing parts of Lord Dalhousie's administration, were marked in Bihar by a very strong feeling of discontent against British rule prevailing among different sections of people in the province. The reasons for the growth of such feeling were manifold but Dalhousie's recent innovations were, undoubtedly, the foremost.

Bihar was one of the most neglected parts of British India, commonly regarded by her British rulers as the Boeotia of India, and her people were overwhelmingly conservative very strongly dominated, politically and economically, by the big *Zamindars* while, socially and psychologically, by their caste and other prejudices. To such a people some of Dalhousie's measures, like Railways, post and telegraph ; his new experiments in the army, law courts and jails, and, above all, his Government's new educational policy virtually reserving, henceforth, all Government employments for English educated persons, could make no sympathetic appeal. This purpose could hardly have been served through a machinery of Government which was wholly unsuited for such purposes, and fundamentally defective in its very structure. William Taylor, the Commissioner of Patna Division, himself admits this defect in his letter to the Director of Public Instruction, dated the 31st January, 1856, "There are in Bihar no adequate means for communication between the Government and the people in the administrative

organisation of the State to enable such influence to be exerted over the minds of the mass to achieve the end desired". This is even more clearly emphasised in Tayler's letter to the Government of Bengal, dated the 27th June, 1855, wherein he observes: "Separated as we necessarily are from the millions around us, by our habits and ideas we are still further and *without* the same necessity, isolated from their hearts by an utter absence of all individual feeling or sympathy. The great mass see or hear of functionary after functionary coming or going and holding the destinies of people in the hollow of their hands, but they seldom, perhaps never know, what it is to feel that the minds of their rulers have even been directed to understand or sympathise with the great heart that is beating around them. The result is, an utter absence of those ties between the Governors and the Governed, that unbought loyalty which is the strength of kings, and which with all his faults the native of India is well capable of feeling".

This state of affairs naturally created an irreconcilable gulf of misunderstanding between the ruler and the ruled, and we find officials after officials making frequently complaints regarding misconstruction of Government's intentions by the people. On the people side the distrust and apprehension were shared by both Hindus and Muslims alike as will appear from the following observations made in Patna Commissioner's letter of 27th June, 1855: "This feeling was not confined to the Mohamadans, but met with entire sympathy from the Hindoos, and I would here by the way remark what is too frequently overlooked that in all such matters there is perfect community of feeling between these two classes, especially among the lower orders in the province. Indeed their

respective creeds sit so loosely upon them, that the festivals, the saints and many observances are held in mutual and undistinguishing veneration".

The anti-Government feelings were not always confined to minds, there were occasional outbreaks as well, such as the disturbances that took place in Arrah and Muzaffarpur Jails. In the mid-summer of 1855 anti-British tension had grown so high throughout Bihar that the Commissioner of Patna Division brought the matter to the notice of the Government of Bengal and even after the Lt. Governor Sir F. J. Halliday had issued a proclamation to ease popular minds, necessitated by the outbreak of Santhal movement in the meantime, the tension did not subside. An anonymous representation purporting to be coming from the principal inhabitants of Bihar setting forth most of the grievances of the people was submitted to the Lt. Governor of Bengal conveying a threat or ultimatum of an open war against British Government if the grievances were not redressed. A more correct idea of the prevailing anti-British tension in Bihar can hardly be formed through any other source than a study of the above representation together with Sir Halliday's minute recorded on this subject on 29th August, 1855. The two documents are reproduced below *in extenso* :—

Enclosures to letter no. 611, dated 8th October, 1855, from Government of Bengal, to Commissioners of Patna and Bhagalpur Divisions. [1]

“(1) Petition of the principal inhabitants of the Province of Bihar and Zillah Azimabad.

[1] Bhagalpur Commissioner's correspondence, Vol. no. 403 (1852—56).

Our representation is this: With a view to impose upon the Natives of Hindoostan a notification has been issued in the Persian language declaring that no Regulations had been passed for the purpose of extinguishing the Hindu and Mohamedan religions which have existed from time immemorial. It is surprising that Government would suppose us to be impudent people. The internal meaning of all things that are done, is always understood by the natives of Hindoostan. It is evident from the notification itself that it was issued for fear of the Sonthals, and it also betrays the evil designs of Government. Have not the Government made many attempts to extinguish the Mohamedan and Hindoo Religions ? but we thank the Almighty that those attempts have not proved successful.

(1) The Government ordered that the prisoners in the Sahebgunj Jail should follow one and the same religion, but for God's wish a serious disturbance ensued. (2) Hundreds of people have been deprived of their bread by establishment of schools. (3) In the current year it pleased the Government to deprive the prisoners of the Muzaffarpur and Arrah Jails of the plates originally given to them, and to supply them, with another sort of plates, but this was not done, nay a serious disturbance ensued. (4) Since his* arrival at this District, the Lieutt. Governor contemplates performing some new acts—(1) establishing schools in every village, (2) passing enactments whereby honourable men would lose their honour, (3) addressing letter to the Native Hakims in praise of English education and Christian religion, (4) desiring to deprive the Hindoos and Mossulmans of their books on religion by means of establishing libraries. The internal design of Government is plain from the notification. It is surprising

that the Government do not understand whether it is difficult or easy to put down the religion of a Nation.

Is not the Government aware of the disturbances caused more than once by prisoners, though living entirely under their control? and the notification attributes this disturbance to the Inspector of Jails, and alleges that the address to the Native Hakims above referred to, was made by Clergymen. This is surely an imposition, because when evil designs do not succeed, a false statement is made with a view to conceal them; and it is absurd to suppose that any person should perform a novel act without consulting the Government.

Our ancestors have said that nothing in the world is lasting, and that every man must die, we are therefore prepared to fight for the cause of our religion. The Government need not plainly declare what its real intentions are, they are well known from the notification, when the above design of Government will be carried out, the whole of the inhabitants of Hindoostan will unite and prepare themselves for battle. The people of Hindoostan say that when they have no fear for life, they will find no difficulty to fight with the Government. Let the Government carry out its intentions but it will repent at last.

The Government officers do not at all think what will follow thereafter, and it shall therefore have only to repent at last.

The Lieutt. Governor has declared that he has no intention of interfering with the religion of any Nation, and that proficiency in the English language lead men to favour. It strikes to the people of Hindustan that to give preference to the English language over the Arabic, Persian and other Vernacular

languages of the Country, is also an imposition, for Government wishes to introduce English language with a view to destroy the Mahomedan and Hindu religions. It is a matter of great surprise that no sovereigns had ever thought of such designs as those entertained by this Government, nay English education was never in existence during the time of the former rulers. No preference should therefore be given to the English language over other languages. It is the duty of a king to make his subjects happy, and this will strengthen his Kingdom. It is not unknown to the Government that it has ever since been the object of all kings to make their subjects happy, and to conquer other countries. But the Government contemplates to destroy our religions, which will be of no benefit to them. The Government do not bear in mind the well known saying of Sadi that the subject is the root, and that the King is the tree. As the Government entertains such evil designs, let it know that there is not the least doubt that the whole of the inhabitants of Hindoostan shall soon unite and plunder its territories, like the Sonthals.

The following three things have chiefly attracted the attention of people of Hindoostan ; (1) the establishment of schools in every village, (2) the destruction of Musjeeds and the Temples of the Hindoos for formation of road, (3) the passing of a rule whereby in making appointments in the public service preference is given to persons possessing a knowledge of the English language. Thus when our religions are destroyed, and we are deprived of the means of earning our bread, life will be a burden to us.

Leaving entirely out of consideration what is stated above, we must say that by the enactment passed in 1854, respectable people will lose their

honour. This Law ordains that females should personally attend the court to answer charges brought against them, and also to give evidence. In this state of things it is better to put an end to our existence than to obey the orders of Government, that is, we should lose our life for the cause of our religion and honour. The people of Hindoostan would wish to fight before schools are established and Musjeeds of the Mahomedans and the temples of the Hindoos, destroyed. Accordingly the Zamindars and Rajahs of Muzaffarpore, Arrah, Chupra, Azimabad, Sahebgunj and Bhaugulpore, and the Sepoys attached to the Jails and Collectorates of these districts, have formed themselves into a party, one of whom has been deputed to the Rajah of Putteallah, one to the Santhals and other to the Rajah of Nepal and to Emperor of Delhi. It is also known that the Rajah of Putteallah, in league with the people of the Punjab, is arranging his troops. It is no wonder that the whole of the people of Hindustan will within a short time gather like ants either in one quarter or in every district to fight for the cause of their religion. The people of Hindoostan, being thus helpless, have made preparations for a battle.

Some bad omens have been visible in Her Majesty's Kingdom : (1) the defeat of the Government troops by the Santhals, (2) the destruction of some bridges on the road, (3) *is unintelligible*, (4) a fouzdari Sheristadar was beaten with shoes while present in the court, (5) the fall of a Court House and also of the building intended for the accommodation of the pleaders, and the consequent death of Chaukidars. No such happenings have occurred since the administration of the British Government, and we think that they will bring injury upon Government. When the whole of the people of Hindoostan will be of one accord,

Government will suffer. The rise and extension of an Empire depend upon the happiness of its subjects, and the King, who made his subjects happy, had his territories cultivated, but that king who made his subjects unhappy, suffered loss. It has been said by philosophers that the best course would be to secure the happiness of the subjects, and at the same time to promote the interests of their Ruler. This object can be accomplished by abolishing the former schools and those that are about to be established, prohibiting the destruction of Musjeeds and Hindoo Temples, adopting measures for preventing the baptism of the Natives, annulling the act for attendance of females at the court and by conferring situations on Omedwars conversant with the Persian and Arabic Languages without giving any preference to those acquainted with the English language. If this is done, the whole of the people of Hindoostan will be satisfied, and will continue to obey, but if otherwise, disturbances will occur in several places.

The consultations held by the people of Hindoostan on the subject would run to a volume, and it is therefore beyond our power to detail them. We bring this to the notice of Government for their benefit should the Government be pleased to extend its mercy towards the people of Hindoostan no disturbances will arise.

(True copies.)

G. L. MORRIS

*Under-Secretary to the Government of
Bengal*

(ii) Minute by the Lieutt. Governor of Bengal, dated 29th August, 1855.

In my minute of the 7th Ultimo I stated the reason which induced me to cause the issue of a proclamation in Persian and the Vernacular to quiet the minds of the People of Behar unsettled by various circumstances.

2. I have received from the acting Commissioner of Patna since the issue of the proclamation (demi-officially) assurances that the proclamation has been productive of the best effects.

3. It has appeared that the excitement occasioned by the missionary pamphlet was by no means confined to the districts round Patna.

4. Mr. Loch, the Judge of Purneah in a demi-official communication to Mr. Grey, states as follows: "This morning I heard that a native had stated to one of the Residents in the station, Mr. Walker, that the Principal Sudder Ameen and Sudder Ameen had received *Purwannabs* from Government directing them to become Christians..... This is said to have caused a good deal of panic in the *Bazar* and hearing this story repeated when in *Cutcherry* I thought it advisable to make urther enquiries. The people said there were rumours of the kind. I asked from what these arose. Some said from the proceedings of the new Society of Mussulaman lately formed in Calcutta, and others that the Missionaries had been issuing printed papers to the people requiring them to be proselytes to the Christian religion. I asked who had received these papers. The Sudder Ameen and late Principal Sudder Ameen one mentioned. I sent for the former and

at my request he brought the enclosed paper which, harmless in itself, has been the cause of these rumours and it is not improbable that the agitation said to be in existence in the Patna and other Behar districts on the subject of compulsory conversion has been fomented by these publications the ignorant supposing them to come as an order from Government and hence the report that *Perwannabs* had been received commanding conversion. It is curious how they attribute underhand motives to Government. It was suggested that it was an artful dodge of Government to get their ends by little and little. Why and how, said I, look at the Marriage Act said one—the Act which declares that a change of religion shall not affect a person's right to property. Look at the system for feeding prisoners introduced in Jails. Look at the effect of English Education the Government is now introducing. Hindoos are no longer Hindoos and Mussulmen are letting go their faith. I was considerably puzzled at the Marriage Act being thrust in as a proof of Government determination to convert the Natives. Not direct but indirect was the reply to break down customs and prejudices. I assured them that the Act only referred to the marriage of of X' tians. Why there are Hindoos and Mussulmen mentioned? I replied, that if mentioned it was only with reference to converts from those two religions, but Government never had made nor would make any attempt to convert the natives as they ought to be aware. The messing system in Jails was quoted as being a sly way of breaking down the prejudice of caste”.

5. A copy of the pamphlet [1] enclosed by Mr. Loch is appended to this minute. It is quite harmless in itself, but it is curious and within my own knowledge

[1] The pamphlet is not included for want of space.

that some of the natives have understood that part of it which alludes to a Judgement to come as threat on the part of Government of the terrible (temporal) consequences which will follow if the persons addressed fail to embrace the Christian religion.

6. It is remarkable that this strange suspicion of the Government purposes has shown itself in the Governor-General's Body Guard at present employed on the Grand Trunk Road against the Santhals.

7. Captain Rattray, the Commander, thus writes (demi-officially) to Mr. Grey under date Camp Munglepore, the 15th August instant "Would you kindly forward an Oordoo copy of the proclamation lately issued by the Lieutenant Governor relative to the conversion to Christianity of the Mohamedans and Hindoos. Many of the men of the Body Guard have asked me whether it was true, that the Government intend forcing them to change their religion, and there is considerable excitement on the subject particularly amongst the Mohamedans, I think the perusal of this proclamation will allay their alarm."

8. And having received the copies he asked for, he again writes under date Camp Neamutpore, August 21st "I have to thank you for the five copies of the late proclamation in Oordoo language and feel obliged to you for so readily responding to my request. The perusal of this paper has given much satisfaction to the men under my command. Many have made copies for transmission to their homes, and others have requested me to allow them to keep an original, it is curious to see both Hindoos and Mohamedans listening to "the man that can read" on a subject apparently so interesting to both, although their religions are so dissimilar".

9. It may be strongly suspected I think that the feeling which has crept into the Body Guard is not unknown in other Regiments of our Army Infantry as well as Cavalry.

10. But a very remarkable testimony to the effect of my proclamation in Bihar is given by an anonymous manifesto addressed to me from Gaya, and purporting or rather pretending to come from "the principal inhabitants of the Province of Bihar". There is no doubt this singular document speaks the real opinions of a busy and mischievous minority of our subjects in Bihar, and I am far from dissatisfied that what I know to be the feeling of many minds on that quarter should in this manner find expression, because I am aware that there are many persons specially in Calcutta who having little experience of any but the Calcutta native feeling disbelieve and persuade others to disbelieve in the existence of any different feeling elsewhere.

11. I am very strongly of opinion that those feelings should by no means be lightly regarded by the Government, but that on the contrary they should induce us at all times to exercise a prudent caution in our measures for the improvement of our subjects and should keep us from urging social reforms more rapidly than is consistent with sound Judgement and Policy and from advancing too much ahead of the understanding and the prejudice of the people.

I append to this minute a translation of my proclamation,* and a translation of the accompanying reply to it to which I have alluded.

Fred. JAS HALLIDAY

29th August, 1855

*Not printed here.

CHAPTER VI

THE MOVEMENT OF 1857—59 IN BIHAR

THE FIRE BREAKS OUT AT ROHINI, 12TH JUNE, 1857

The outbreak of Mutiny at Meerut and Delhi created grave excitement throughout Bihar and consternation was everywhere felt and expressed in the British official circles. Sparks were visible here and there and general conflagration was every moment expected.

As already indicated it was at Rohini (a village in Deoghar Sub-Division of Santhal Parganas District) Headquarters of the 5th Irregular Cavalry under Major MacDonald, that there was the first outbreak of the movement in the evening of the 12th June, 1857. Three troopers of Major MacDonald's regiment there attacked him, Lt. Sir Norman Leslie, the Adjutant, and the Assistant Surgeon Mr. Grant. Leslie were killed and the other two wounded. But MacDonald soon suppressed the rising ruthlessly and inflicted horrible punishment on the three on the 16th June. They were brought to drum-head court-martial and hanged in the most brutal manner, the officials clearly exhibiting their fire of vengeance at the time of the execution of the sentence^[1]. The headquarters of the Regiment was shifted to Bhagalpur where they revolted on the 14th August next.

PATNA, 3RD JULY, 1857

The next incident after what had happened at Rohini was a furious rising at Patna on the 3rd July.

[1] Mutiny of Bengal Army, p. 116.

Dr. Lyell, the Principal Assistant to the Opium Agent of Bihar, proceeded to quell it in the company of 50 *Nijeeb* guards, a *Subadar* and eight Sikhs, but was immediately killed. The moment was critical for the Company's executive at Patna, and they used all resources of their authority against it. Mr. J. M. Lewis, the Magistrate at Patna, accompanied by Captain Rattray, Lt. Campbell, the Assistant Magistrate, Mr. Mangles and a guard of hundred men of Sikh Police Battalion under Capt. Rattray, advanced to the scene of disturbance and quelled it with considerable strain. Maulavi Ali Karim, the leader, escaped. All the property belonging to Ali Karim whether held in his own name or the names of others was immediately ordered to be confiscated. 'A reward of Rs. 2,000 afterwards raised to Rs. 5000 was offered for his head'[1]. Ali Karim went to Gorakhpur and joined a party fighting against the English. On the 4th July a complete search was made in the city of Patna, and various other measures of repression were adopted by the local officers of the Government. The house of Peer Ali, the book-seller, who was proved to have been the principal in the riot, was searched and a quantity of arms and 'some letters of importance' were found. The house was razed to the ground and 'a post placed on the site with an inscription telling of the crime and fates of the owner and his accomplices'. Thirty-six persons, including Peer Ali Khan, were captured and tried by the Magistrate himself under the Commission on the 7th instant. Sixteen were sentenced to death and immediately hanged[2], the remaining awarded various terms of imprisonment including transportation for life.

[1] W. Tayler · Our Crisis, page 41.

[2] Patna Commissioner's Judicial Department confidential file of 1857.

REPRESSION IN NORTH BIHAR AND INCIDENTS AT
SUGAULI, 25TH JULY, 1857

The indigo planters and other Europeans in North Bihar were greatly perturbed in the month of June, 1857, in apprehension of an outbreak. They were called to Muzaffarpur by its Magistrate on the 14th June for 'mutual protection'. Major E. S. Holmes of the 12th Irregular Cavalry stationed at Sugauli in the Headquarters subdivision of the Champaran district used highly repressive means to suppress the movement in that area. He declared Martial Law in that area and was hanging right and left mostly sepoys returned from the scene of action laden with booty. Waris Ali, a police *Jamadar* of Muzaffarpur, was suspected of carrying treasonable correspondence, seized and hanged. The Civil Officers concerned objected to this assumption of arbitrary powers by Major Holmes and the Government of Bengal concurred in their view, but declared that Major Holmes' "intentions are doubtless good". In fact Major Holmes' cruelties continued unabated. This led four exasperated soldeirs to kill him and his wife in the evening of 25th July, 1857, the day on which the Regiments at Dinapur revolted. Dr. Garner, Mrs. Garner and one of their children and Mr. Bennet, the Deputy Post-Master, were also killed by the 12th Irregular Cavalry, who then went off to the north-west via Siwan where the Deputy Magistrate, and the Sub-Deputy Opium Agent had a narrow escape.

GAYA IN FERMENT

Ever since the commencement of convulsions in upper India, there had been indications of unrest pervading all classes of people in Gaya. Secret meetings were being held in the city, and attempts

were made on the part of revolutionaries to win over Sikh soldiers and the *Nijeeb* guards stationed there. Mr. Alonzo Money, the Collector and Magistrate, had reported to the Commissioner of Kuar Singh 'having enjoined upon his *rayots* to be ready when called', and his writing to two of the largest *zamindars* of this district [1]. Previous to this information had been received of the *zamindar* of Tekari having mounted 200 guns on the Tekari fort. However, there was no overt-act committed as yet. On the 31st July, the Collector received Mr. Tayler's message informing him of the defeat of Dunbar's army near Arrah, and saying that, "everything must now be sacrificed to holding the country and occupation of a central position". Leaving the treasure behind consisting of 7 lakhs of rupees, all the British residents left the town on receiving this message, but Money, and the Dy. Opium Agent Mr. Hollings returned back after they had already marched a few miles. On the 1st August the news of the fall of Arrah was received in Gaya, and on the 3rd the Collector, in the meantime availing himself of the help of a detachment of 64th passing through Grand Trunk Road, despatched the treasure to Calcutta through Sherghati. No sooner had the party left Gaya, the *Nijeeb* broke out in open revolt, the jail was broken, the prisoners released, and the British party pursued.

Gaya was reoccupied on the 16th August by a force of 200 Sikhs and men of the 85th. The outstations of Sherghati and Nawada, which had also been abandoned, were reoccupied, and a small party sent out to relieve the Tehta Sub-Deputy Opium Agency, which was reported as being besieged, dispersed a body of 200 insurgents.

[1] Letter, dated 11th March, 1858, from Magistrate of Gaya, to Commissioner, Patna Division.

On the 8th September the 5th Irregular Cavalry which had revolted at Bhagalpur, marched into Gaya district. "At length after having destroyed the public buildings at Nawada, they approached Gaya, and Captain Rattray proceeded to encounter them at a few miles distance from the station; but after a severe skirmish, in which . . . they inflicted considerable loss on the police Battalion they evaded him and got to Gaya before he could reach it" [1]. Here they attacked a fortified house of British officials, broke open the jail and again released the prisoners. After this they left for Tekari and from there towards the Sone. Towards the end of October fresh alarm was caused by the advance of two companies of the 32nd N. I. which had mutinied at Deoghar, but the insurgents continued their march through Jehanabad to the Sone without visiting Gaya. "Had the Dinapur Regiments, the Ramgarh Battalion, the 5th Irregulars, and the 32nd gone together", observes Mr. A. Money in his letter to the Commissioner, dated 11th March, 1858, "nothing could for a time have withstood them".

[1] Halliday's Minute, dated 30th September, 1858.

CHAPTER VII

KUAR SINGH AND THE MOVEMENT IN SHAHABAD

The three native regiments stationed at Dinapur rose against the Company on the 25th July, 1857. On the 26th they marched into the district of Shahabad, there to be joined by Kuar Singh of Jagdishpur who was prepared to lead them in their new struggle against British rule in India. This was indeed a bold but not a sudden jump on the part of Kuar Singh. He must have been meditating on a plan to assail British authority at least for sometime on the eve of the outbreak of this movement if not all along from 1845. William Tayler, Commissioner of Patna, seems to have an idea of utilising his friendship in the impending danger for the Government. He invited the Rajput chief to meet him at Patna, but the latter tactfully avoided it, probably in consideration of Tayler's unworthy conduct towards the three respectable Muslim gentlemen at Patna on the 19th June, when they had been invited to Commissioner's residence "for consultation on the state of affairs" [1] and then treacherously arrested. Mr. Wake, Magistrate of Arrah, significantly observes in his letter to the Commissioner of Patna, dated the 29th January, 1858, "... the information I have received leaves no room for doubt that Kooer Singh had for sometime been planning the rebellion, and was waiting for Dinapur Regiments. I am inclined to attribute the lull to the efforts made by him to keep the Rajpoots quiet until the proper moment arrived, and the good

[1] W. Tayler ; Our Crisis, p. 30.

behaviour of lower castes to the promise of license held out to them when the outbreak should occur. This view of the case is not so flattering to myself, but I am convinced that it is the right one. I know that there is an idea prevalent that Kooer Singh's treason was not pre-meditated ; but I am certain that for three months at least he was only biding his time. There is, or ought to be, in Commissioner's office an anonymous petition or rather a petition from a man who could not come forward, forwarded by me to Mr. Tayler, the late Commissioner, detailing the whole of the Baboo's (*Kuar Singh's*) plans and preparations and even the exact date (*25th July*) on which the Dinapur Regiment would mutiny. This was forwarded by me, I think, a week before the Mutiny, and every word of it proved true ”.

Joined by the troops who had marched from Dinapur to Arrah, on Monday, the 27th July, Kuar Singh's party besieged the English garrison at Arrah even after the Magistrate there, Mr. H. C. Wake, and all the European residents had already (26th evening) taken shelter in a detached two storey house fortified by Vicars Boyle, Railway Engineer. The *Nujeeb* guards of the English at Arrah welcomed the revolted Sepoyees of Dinapur when the latter after marching to Arrah besieged the English garrison there. There was probably previous understanding between the two [1]. The siege continued till the 3rd August, when the besieged were relieved by Vincent Eyre's force. Meanwhile one English force sent from Dinapur under Capt. Dunbar had to suffer a crushing defeat near Arrah on the 29th /30th, as has already been said [2].

[1] Tayler : Our Crisis, Chapter III.

[2] Vide Introduction.

It is significant to note that no European was killed at Arrah by the party of Kuar Singh. Samuells records in his letter to the Government of Bengal, dated the 25th September, 1858, that some of them who 'fell' into his hands and those of his relatives were fairly treated. The Magistrate of Shahabad reported to Commissioner on the 29th January, 1858, "there is one redeeming feature in the disturbances in the district.....except in the case of soldiers retreating from Arrah, there has been no cold-blooded assassinations of Europeans".

In fact Arrah passed for the time being under Kuar Singh's control. He soon set up his own machinery of administration on the model of the British system by appointing his own officers. "He proclaimed himself ruler of the country", wrote Samuells in his letter of the 25th September, 1858, adding further that "all the acts of Kuar Singh during the short time he remained at Arrah, showed that he considered his *Raj* to be firmly established and that he was desirous of medelling his Government on that of the Government which he had superseded," Kuar Singh established two *thanas* at Arrah under the control of Gholam Yahea as Magistrate.

The sudden appearance of Major Vincent Eyre in Shahabad, the battle of Bibigunj, the subsequent relief of the garrison at Arrah, the fall and pillage of Jagdishpur, and Kuar Singh's exit from Shahabad have already been described elsewhere [1].

Meanwhile Mr. Tayler had been removed from Patna Commissionership and Mr. E. A. Samuells had been appointed in his place on the 5th August. On the same date General Outram was appointed Joint Commander of Dinapur and Cawnpur on the removal

[1] Vide Introduction.

of Lloyd and Havelock from the respective stations. Pending the arrival of Mr. Samuells, Mr. R. N. Farquharson, Judge of Patna, officiated as Commissioner till the 17th August, 1857. According to instructions from the Government, the latter immediately announced a reward of 10 thousand rupees for the apprehension of Kuar Singh and asked his subordinate officers to give it good publicity. Kuar Singh's entire estate was, at the same time, ordered to be confiscated. On the 18th Mr. Samuells, having received the charge of Commissioner passed an order to the Magistrate of Arrah sanctioning the occupation of Buxar as civil station till the buildings at Arrah, then in a ruined state, were repaired. On hearing that Kuar Singh and Amar Singh had moved towards the south, Samuells informed the Magistrate and Sessions Judge of Arrah on the 22nd and 26th August respectively that there was no longer the same necessity as before for concentrating their establishment at Buxar, that the treasury, the Principal Sudder Ameen and Civil Officers should remain at Buxar and the fort there be garrisoned by a small body of Sikhs but that the Magistrate and Sessions Judge should hold their *Cutcheries* at Arrah. The Circuit House and Kuar Singh's House in that city were available for the purpose of holding *Cutcheries*. Eyre's success and vandalism during the middle of August, 1857, could not cow down Kuar Singh, Amar Singh and their compatriots. The whole of western Bihar still remained agitated and disturbed. After his retreat from Jagdishpur Kuar Singh made a forced march as far as Nokha, about 10 miles north of Sasaram. He halted there for some time and was "furnished with all supplies" as is mentioned in a contemporary letter [1], "by the zamindars holding

[1] Letter, dated the 30th August 1857, from the Deputy Magistrate of Sasaram, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

villages in the neighbourhood, but the most conspicuous among them were the *Maliks* of Buraon...who went so far as to come to Sasaram and openly proclaimed that the Company's *raj* had ceased". Kuar Singh then proceeded towards Rohtas and remained in this area for most of the days of August waiting for a junction with the 'Ramgarh mutineers' and the 5th Irregulars of Bhagalpur, who, it was reported, were marching to join him.

Shah Kabeeruddin of Sasaram, who was trying to oppose Kuar Singh by all possible means and for which he received immense rewards after Kuar Singh's fall, requested the Government to send troops to Sasaram, and on the 24th Capt. Rattray was directed by the Commissioner to send 150 Sikhs to Sasaram. Kuar Singh and his adherents of the 40th Regiment were at Bidyagurh (Bijaygarh) near Mirzapur on the 26th August. They proceeded then to Singrowlla and marched towards Rewah^[1] with the Raja of which place Kuar Singh had distant relationship. He moved from that place fighting bravely against the English troops to their great embarrassment at several centres in conjunction with local chiefs and also supported by the common people. Early in September, 1857, when Kuar Singh was about eight miles from Rewah, the Raja of that place, 'faithful' to the English, wrote to him not to enter his territory, but popular support facilitated Kuar Singh's entry into Rewah. The Raja with his family left the Capital. Lt. Willoughby Osborn, then in the 'Political employ of the Raja' as Agent and Colonel Hind, who commanded the Rewah Regiment, opposed Kuar Singh and his party and could maintain their position after a hard struggle.

[1] Letter, dated the 2nd September, 1857, from Commissioner, Patna Division, to Magistrate, Shahabad.

From Rewah, Kuar Singh proceeded with his men to Banda where he attempted to effect a junction with Tantia Topi[1] in the first week of October, 1857. Opposed by some local *zamindars*, Kuar Singh left Banda on the 20th October for Kalpi. Soon Kuar Singh joined the Gwalior troops[2] and fought along with them and Nana Rao (?) at the Battle of Kandhapur. They had no success against the superior forces of the English. On the 25th, Kuar Singh made a diversion to the north-west and he was at Lucknow within a few days. At Lucknow, the Shah of Oudh presented him a robe of honour, some thousands of rupees and a *firman* for the district of Azamgarh.[3] Kuar Singh with 2,000 followers went also to Ayodhya. A party of 1,800 men under a nephew of Kuar Singh had assembled at Burni Ghat on the Gogra early in December, 1857, whom the officers of the Company in spite of their best effort could not successfully oppose.[4] Early in February, 1858, 'a considerable body of sepoys with 4 or 5 guns had arrived at Faizabad and Kuar Singh with reinforcements was somewhere between Lucknow and Durriapur.[5] About 12th February he was at Ayodhya with 2,000 followers. On the 17th March, he joined a party of his comrades at Atraulia, 25 miles from Azamgarh. The British troops in the Azamgarh district under Colonel Milman attacked him on the 22nd March, but after some initial success they were themselves defeated and retreated into the entrancements at Azamgarh.[6] Further attempts to dislodge the victors from their position having failed, Azamgarh remained for the time being under virtual control of Kuar Singh.

[1] Military Consultations, 6th November, 1857, No. II.

[2] Statement of Nishan Singh during his trial by Court Martial.

[3] Military Consultations, 27th November, 1857, No. 488.

[4] Secret Consultations, 18th December, 1857, No. 29.

[5] Malleson : History of Indian Mutiny, Vol. II, p. 456.

[6] *Ibid.*

The situation at Azamgarh caused much anxiety to the English in Bihar. Mr. A. R. Young, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, sent the following message from the Commissioner of Patna for the information of the Governor-General: "there is great alarm both at Chupra and Arrah....The rebels have collected ninety large boats on the Gogra and threatened to visit Hathwa and Chupra. I think the Sikhs should march at once to Arrah whence they and Europeans could move at once to Chupra, if necessary. It would allay alarm if I am enabled to say what steps the Government is taking to disperse the rebels in Azimagarh".

The express sent by Colonel Milman to Allahabad conveying the news of his own defeat and the success of Kuar Singh reached there on the 27th March and caused much anxiety to Lord Canning who was then at Allahabad. He at once ordered Lord Mark Kerr, Commander of the right wing of the 13th Light Cavalry, to march with all speed to Benares and after picking up whatever troops might be available there to push on to Azamgarh to fight Kuar Singh. Lord Mark Kerr reached Azamgarh on the 6th April but awaited, under the directions from the Commander-in-Chief, the arrival of a bigger force under Sir E. Lugard who had been ordered by the Commander-in-Chief to press on Kuar Singh. As a strategic move Kuar Singh evacuated the place on the 13th April with a part of his troops, leaving the rest there, and proceeded towards Ghazipur with a view to crossing the river Ganges there for re-entering into jungles of Jagdishpur and renewing the contest in that area.

Sir E. Lugard having arrived within the vicinity of Azamgarh was opposed by a party of Kuar Singh's

troops on the 16th April. The latter "fought well and with more determination than usual, and it was not without severe struggle that they were defeated and expelled from the city. They retired in good order and were pursued for about a dozen miles". Apprehending that they might cause embarrassment in the direction of Gorakhpur where they were proceeding, Sir E. Lugard sent Brigadier Douglas in pursuit of them, and with the authority of his Government he issued a proclamation offering Rs. 25,000 and a free pardon to anyone who would deliver over to the British the person of Kuar Singh. After an encounter with Douglas on the 17th April, Kuar Singh, with his usual tact and skill baffling all attempts on enemy's part, marched on to Nagri, and then to Sikandarpur where he crossed the Gogra, and then pushed on to Maunahar in the Ghazipur district in the night of the 20th April. There was an enthusiasm in Kuar Singh's favour amongst the common people in Ghazipur district. The Sheopur Baboos entertained Kuar Singh in a feast and provided him with 20 boats. In spite of sustaining personal physical injuries in an encounter with Douglas, Kuar Singh with a large body of sepoys crossed the Ganges at Sheopur Ghat ten miles below Balia in the night of 21st by baffling Douglas and outwitting Colonel Cumberlege who with two regiments of Madras Cavalry had been despatched to intercept his movement. Next day Kuar Singh was at Jagdishpur, strongly determined to continue his fight against the English though he had lost his one arm and was wounded in the thigh. On the 23rd, British force proceeding from Arrah under Capt. Legrand against Kuar Singh towards Jagdishpur suffered a severe repulse with heavy losses. Legrand and many other English officers lost their lives. Some of their guns were captured by the victors and, as it was reported to the English by their

spies, "of the detachment of 250 or 300 men sent against Kuar Singh only 25 or 35 sikhs and 7 officers were seen by them returning to Arrah."

But Kuar Singh was not destined to live long. Worn out by age, fatigue and incessant fighting he succumbed to his wounds shortly after his re-entry into Shahabad.

CHAPTER VIII

AMAR SINGH AND HARKISHAN SINGH— GENERALS OF BABU KUAR SINGH, AND THE REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT AT JAGDISHPUR

After the fall of Jagdishpur and Kuar Singh's exit from Shahabad after August, 1857, the cause was ably taken up by Kuar Singh's compatriots led by his youngest brother Amar Singh who had also commanded the rebel forces when Eyre was proceeding towards Jagdishpur. Amar Singh carried on a prolonged guerilla warfare from the fastnesses of Rohtas Hills against the Company's forces and cut off communications between Gaya and Sasaram. Coming down the hills he moved with his party near Sasaram and Rohtas and the optimism of the Patna Commissioner about improved situation at Buxar soon vanished. Towards the end of August, 1857, Amar Singh was at Kuchoowar about 12 miles from Sasaram and a rumour of his return towards Sasaram greatly perturbed the Commissioner who advised Lt. Stanton at Sherghati on the 3rd September to telegraph to Calcutta to obtain permission to halt the European troops then passing along the Grand Trunk Road at Dehri until a body of 400 or 500 was collected and that 'this body should then be directed to make a demonstration against Ummar Singh so as to drive him into the hills and to reduce submission of those villages between Sasaram and Benares which still continue to be refractory.' "If Amar Singh does re-occupy the country to the north of Grand Trunk Road", observes the Commissioner in the same letter, "and is joined by

the villagers as he may probably will be, the consequences not only to the Arrah but to the Patna and Gaya districts will be most serious". Such of the European residents of Patna Division who had not so far shifted their families to safer zones were required to remove their females and children to Calcutta so that the troops might not be embarrassed with the work of protecting them. A reward of Rs. 2,000, which was soon raised to Rs. 5,000, was announced for the apprehension of Amar Singh and of Rs. 1,000 and 500 each for that of Nishan Singh and Harkishan Singh respectively^[1]. Amar Singh succeeded in evading capture and appeared on the 16th September, at Kurredeah on the Grand Trunk Road, 'cut the Telegraph line, carried off all *dak* horses and retreated to the hills'^[2]. The inhabitants of several villages at the foot of the Kaimur Hills knew the whereabouts of Amar Singh, Sirnam Singh and others in their party and they protected them by fidelity^[3]. A portion of Col. Fisher's column, moving along the G. T. Road, was ordered to halt at Dehri and it reached there on the 23rd September. Captain Rattray was also ordered to send to that place as many troops as he could spare. On 28th September, Lt. Baker of Rattray's Sikhs surprised Amar Singh's village Sirohi. Amar Singh was not there but a *Jamadar*, a *Havildar* and two *sepoy*s were captured and hanged two days afterwards^[4]. The presence of Amar Singh in south Shahabad continued to cause anxiety to the English Officers for many months more till this apprehension merged into the

[1] Letter, dated the 5th September 1857, from Commissioner, Patna Division to Magistrate, Shahabad.

[2] Military consultations, 28th September 1857, no. 410.

[3] Letter, dated the 25th September 1858, from Commissioner, Patna Division, to Government of Bengal.

[4] Minute of Sir F. J. Halliday, 30th September 1858.

general nervousness that was created in the British Circle by sudden re-entry of Kuar Singh into Shahabad during April, 1858.

Immediately on hearing of the disaster of Le-Grand, Brigadier-General Lugard started with a portion of his brigade from the neighbourhood of Azamgarh, and reached the vicinity of Arrah in the first week of May, 1858. He had several skirmishes with the troops of Amar Singh during the two following weeks of May, one of these fought at Dalippur on the 27th May, being somewhat severe in nature. This could not extinguish the zeal of Shahabad fighters. They distributed themselves in small parties and continued to harass their enemy. Lugard divided his force in two columns at two opposite points at the edge of the Jagdishpur jungles one at Keshwa and the other at Dalippur and attacked them on the 4th June. Still they fought valiantly and in spite of sustaining some losses were far from being vanquished. On the same day they marched to Surajpura and 'plundered the house of the Dumraon Raja's Dewan'. Nishan Singh who had been separated from the main body a few days back, was captured near his village Buddee by Captain Nolan, and after a short and summary trial by Court Martial was blown away from a gun. But Amar Singh and his party crossed the river Karmnassa at Soopa on the 7th June and proceeded towards Gahmur in the *Zamania pargana* of the Ghazipur district most of the inhabitants of which together with those of Barra and some other Rajput villages joined them [1]. Amar Singh and his followers returned to the jungles near Jagdishpur within a few days and during their march fired a few shots on Rattray's camp at Roop Saugor

[1] Letter, dated the 10th June 1858, from Commissioner of Patna Division, to Government of Bengal.

on the 12th June^[1]. Although the British officers and soldiers were doing their best, the interiors of the Patna Division had then passed under the virtual control of Shahabad leaders and their followers. Thus the Commissioner of Patna wrote to the Government on the 18th June, 1858, "The main body under Amar Singh which had crossed the Sone has turned back on hearing that General Lugard has retired and was yesterday at Beerooth, a few miles east of Jagdishpur. This body appear to number about 1,000 men, partly Sepoys, partly villagers. Judhar Singh (Jeodhar Singh, resident of Khumaine, pergana Arwal) with a party of 6 or 7 hundred has proceeded up to the right bank of the Sone to Daudnagar, plundering, burning and murdering as he goes. His brother Hetam Singh is pursuing the same course in the Bikram *Thana* of Patna and the Urwal *thana* in *Zillah* Bihar. Our troops are now confined to the stations, and the interior of the district of Shahabad, Patna and Bihar has been abandoned to the rebels. They (rebels) are at this moment offering a reward all over the country for the heads of Government officers and conducting themselves in every respect as if they were the true men and we were the thieves". With the exception of the *Darogas* at Arrah, Buraon, Ramgarh and Chausa, who were protected by troops all of the police in the areas to the north of the Grand Trunk Road were compelled to abandon their *Thanas*. Batches of revolutionary workers were then active also in Gaya and Chapra districts. Early in July Capt. Rattray succeeded in capturing Sirnam Singh and destroying the whole of the male members of his family^[2] by a treacherous stratagem described in Sir Halliday's minute as follows: "The few *Hindustanis*

[1] Letter, dated the 14th June 1858, from Commissioner of Patna Division, to Government of Bengal.

[2] Secret consultations, 30th July 1858, nos. 195 and 198.

in Captain Rattray's Battalion, numbering not more than 7 and a *sepooy* of the late 56th N. I. having under the guise of mutineers, obtained access to the robber Chief, killed his retainers, brought in himself as prisoner. He was afterwards tried and sentenced to be blown from a gun and the sentence was immediately carried out".

But Amar Singh and his followers retained their control in Shahabad throughout the month of July. On the 7th July they had an indecisive engagement with Lt. Col. Walter at the village of Sanutha, which belonging to Amar Singh was destroyed by the British troops. But this did not improve the situation and the Commissioner of Patna wrote to the Government of Bengal on the 30th July, 1858, "The main body of the rebels still continue in the neighbourhood of Jagdishpur, and ape our Government in the appointment of Commissioners, Judges and Magistrates. They even copy our revenue system (which some people tell us has produced the rebellion) to the letter and sell all the states of our friends for arrears of revenue with as much punctuality as the Collector himself could evince. Umar Singh (Amar Singh) hung a sepoy the other day for the murder of a Banneah which shows that the rebels are compelled to conciliate the people by occasionally giving them justice, even when the offending party is one of themselves".

Har Kishen Singh [1] was, in fact, the head of the Government set up at Jagdishpur under the authority of Amar Singh. It was calculated to promote the well being of the people in general. Its military organisation was efficient. Officers both in the civil

[1] Proceedings of the trial of Harkishen Singh.

and military establishments, held different ranks. For example, there were, Superintendent of Ordinance Factories ; Generals, etc. Divisions of the armies were organised according to particular localities, such as Chougain Division, Karesaath Division, etc.

On the 13th October, Douglas caused seven columns to converge near Jagdishpur with a view to overpowering [1] the insurgents there. But the latter safely evacuated the place. This was followed on the 19th, 20th and 21st October by stronger offensives against them, arranged by Major Sir Henry Havelock and marked by the use of long range Enfield rifles. Towards the end of November there was a conference of some of the Bihar leaders of the movement at Bhudour with a few civil and military officers of the British Government (Mr. Money, Col. Walters, Mr. Mackenzie, Lt. Beadon and some others) but it did not result in any compromise. Fighting continued unabated, even though the Bihar fighters were defeated many times. At last the leaders went underground.

After the publication of the Queen's proclamation in November, 1858, the Commissioner of Patna permitted the Magistrate of Shahabad on the 11th November, 1858 to admit all the benefits of amnesty with the exception of fourteen leaders. They were Amar Singh, Harikishan Singh, Sheo Pershun Roy (of Courie, *pergana* Bihar), Jodhur Singh, Sidha Singh (of *pergana* Balia, *Zilla* Ghazipur), Needha Singh (Beyriah, *Zilla* Ghazipur), Ram Bahadur Singh, Meghus Singh (or Roy of Gamhar, *pergana* Zamania, *Zilla* Ghazipur), Debi Ojha (of Sujhowlee, *pergana* Bihia), Ibrahim Khan (of *pergana* Zamania, *Zilla* Ghazipur) and four brothers of Harkissen Singh, Laksmi

[1] Home consultations, 3rd December 1858, no. 32.

Singh, Kashi Singh, Anand Singh and Radhe Singh (all the four were residents of Barubhee, *pergana* Bhojpur).

Government servants and agents continued vigorous search for the capture of the leaders. Harkishan Singh was apprehended at Mauza Dineah in *pergana* Badhoul, *Zilla* Banares by the *Naib-Kotwal* of Dussah Samedh on the 29th August, 1859. After being confined at Arrah, he was convicted of several charges and tried by R. J. Richardson, officiating Judge of Shahabad and Special Commissioner under Act XIV of 1857. The verdict in trial was that, "he be taken from the Arrah jail.....to the *chowk* at Jugdishpur...and that he be hanged there by the neck until he be dead".

Amar Singh was moving from place to place with unflagging energy to keep up the struggle. After the retreat of Nana Saheb into Nepal, he went to the *Tarai* region to assume the leadership of Nana's troops. But he was ultimately captured about the middle of December, 1859 by a force under Maharaja Jung Bahadur. He was kept in custody temporarily in the Gorakhpur Jail. The Government of the North-West Provinces (U. P.) enquired of the Bengal Government as to whether he was to stand trial at Gorakhpur or in his own district of Shahabad. The Bengal Government's view was that "in some respects the trial of Ummer Singh (Amar Singh) in his own district wouldbe most exemplary". But death saved Amar Singh from disgrace. On an attack of dysentery he was admitted into the Gorakhpur Jail Hospital on the 3rd January, 1860, and died there on the 5th February, 1860, before his trial could take place.

CHAPTER IX

CHOTANAGPUR IN REVOLT (1857—59)

British authority was seriously challenged during the Mutiny and even afterwards nearly throughout the whole of Chotanagpur Division. At Hazaribagh there were the detachments of the 8th and 7th Native Infantry sent from Patna on station duty in July, 1857, at Ranchi was quartered the headquarters and artillery of the Ramgarh Battalion, and at Chaibasa and Purulia were detachments of the last Battalion. The Company of Infantry at Hazaribagh revolted towards the end of July, 1857. Just before this the European officers there had managed immediate flight. The news of the impending outbreak was brought to the Commissioner of Chotanagpur by Captain Oakes, the Judicial Commissioner, who had run to Ranchi on the 1st August.

Smouldering discontent soon manifested itself in open outbreaks at other places too. The example of Hazaribagh troops was followed in no time by the two companies of the Ramgarh Infantry with whom Lt. Graham had been ordered to proceed to Hazaribagh to disarm the battalions there on suspicion of disloyalty. They revolted under the leadership of Madhab Singh, the *Jamadar*, and hurried back to Ranchi to join others. Those at Doranda also followed suit under the guidance of Jaimangal Pandey. Both Ranchi and Doranda soon fell under the control of the revolted sepoys who took possession of what they found in the local treasury and released the prisoners from the jails. Thakur Bishwanath Shahi of Burkagarh and Pandey Ganpat Rai

of Bhowro, two influential *zamindars* of Lohardagga were leading supporters of the movement and the former, after the mutiny at Ranchi, was declared chief of the insurgents, took his seat in Captain Nation's Bangalow at Doranda, held regular courts there and passed orders. Detachments of Ramgarh Battalion at Purulia also revolted on the 5th August. Their comrades at Doranda left Doranda on the 11th September and were joined at Chauriya by Bhola Singh, a *zamindar*, and from there they went through Kara and Chandwa to Chatra. They intended to proceed through Palamau and to effect a junction with Kuar Singh's forces at Rohatasgarh. There is no doubt that all who had revolted in Bihar, Chotanagpur, Manbhum, Singhbhum and Palamau, wanted to work together under the common leadership of Kuar Singh. Jadunath Shahi, son of Thakur Kapilnath Shahi, a petty *zamindar* of Sulgee, joined the people's party. He was regarded by the people in the Ranchi area as an agent of Kuar Singh [1] as he had married a daughter of his brother Dayal Singh.

In the mean time Colonel Dalton, the Commissioner, the Judicial Commissioner (Mr. Oakes), the officer commanding at Doranda, and one lieutenant had left their respective positions and proceeded to Hazaribagh through the direct route via Pithaurea. *Parganait* Jagatdeo Singh of Pithaurea and the Raja of Ramgarh assisted Colonel Dalton with some men and the latter was able to regain Hazaribagh. But not being supplied with European troops for which Dalton had asked his masters, he proceeded towards the Grand Trunk Road like the Hazaribagh officials and reached Bagodar on the 13th August. On the 18th he moved to Barhi where on the 26th he was

[1] Letter, dated the 29th October, 1857, from J. S. Davies, to the Commissioner, Chotanagpur.

joined by 150 of Rattray's Sikhs under Lt. Earle commanding Bengal Police Detachment. With their help he returned to Hazaribagh by the end of September and re-occupied his post temporarily. The Lt. Governor had already (18th August) caused martial law to be proclaimed in all the districts forming Chotanagpur Division.

Shortly afterwards, reinforcements having reached, the Commissioner with a batch of relieving force returned to Ranchi on the 22nd September. The insurgents had marched to Chatra by that time. Here on the 2nd October they had a severe engagement with the troops under Major English and Sikhs under Lt. Earle and were defeated. As was stated by Major Simpson, Principal Assistant Commissioner of Hazaribagh in his letter to Colonel Dalton, dated the 4th October, "their artillery with four six-pounder guns and ammunitions were captured. The killed and wounded of the British troops aggregated 56 men—46 Europeans and 10 Sikhs. The wounds of some of the Europeans were severe, 4 of them underwent amputation. Seventy-seven bodies of mutineers were buried in one pit on the 3rd October and the number of the wounded must have been very large." [1]

Jamadar Madhab Singh evaded capture all throughout although the company's Government had announced a reward for his head. But Jaimangal Pandey and Nadir Ali Khan, *Subadars* of the Ramgarh Battalion and two local leaders of the movement, were captured and brought before Major Simpson on the 3rd October. They were tried under provision of Act XVII of 1857 and sentenced to death. Bishwanath Sahai and Ganpat Pandey also escaped

[1] Bengal past and present (July—December, 1941), page 48.

for some time. They were captured at Lakraj in Lohardagga by Major Nation, Commandant of the 9th Bengal Police Battalion, in March, 1858, and were hanged at Ranchi on the trees to the north of Commissioner's compound on the 16th and 21st April, 1858 respectively. Over two hundred sepoys were also hanged. Many others were court-martialed at Ranchi and were condemned to various kinds of punishments, such as transportation for life or for years and long-term and short-term imprisonment. The properties of Thakur Bishwanath Sahi and Pandey Ganpat Rai were confiscated.

On the victory of British Army at Chatra, Col. Dalton had begun to feel immense relief, but he was to be disillusioned in no time. Though Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Purulia had been reoccupied by the Company's officers, in Singhbhum and Palamau the movement was still in progress.

CHAPTER X

RAJA ARJUN SINGH OF PORAHAT—THE POPULAR LEADER OF SINGHBHUM DURING THE MOVEMENT OF 1857—59

On hearing of the Mutiny at Ranchi and Hazari-
bagh early in August, 1857, Captain Sissmore, Senior
Assistant Commissioner incharge at Chiabasa, aban-
doned the station for fear of a rising there, and
after taking refuge for sometime in the *garh* of the
Seraikela *zamindar*, fled away with his children to
Calcutta, leaving the civil station and treasury under
the charge of the native officer of the detachment
of troops (Ramgarh Battalion) there and the Seraikella
Raja. Soon, emissaries from the Ranchi revolu-
tionaries began to arrive at Chaibasa to organize the
movement in Singhbhum and to urge the Sepoys
to rise up and take the treasury to Ranchi. For
leadership of the movement in Singhbhumi area, the
eyes of the people naturally fell on Raja Arjun Singh
of Porahat, who commanded 'great influence over
the excitable Coles; especially the more intractable
tribes of the south by whom he was regarded with
the reverence due to the deity'[1]. His learning, enli-
ghtenment and, above all, his strong sense of justice,
which even his adversaries have admitted in their
official writings, had well qualified him for this
honour from his people[2].

Accordingly, a proclamation was issued by the
people on the 13th August: "The people belonged

[1] Letter from Mr. Dalton, Commissioner of Chotanagpur, to the
Government of Bengal, dated the 26th June, 1861.

[2] *Ibid.*

to God, the Country to the King, and Urjoon Singh is Ruler thereof"[1]. This led to the Seraikela Raja completely abandoning the civil station of Chaibasa into the hands of the Sepoys, who however, did not yet openly revolt waiting for Arjun Singh's disposition.

Although Arjun Singh was proclaimed ruler of the country, his lukewarmness and indecision, not befitting the role of a revolutionary leader, which his people wanted him to play, long held him back from boldly joining the popular cause, although his brother Byjenath Singh, his courtiers Juggoo and Raghoo Deo, and other bolder spirits around him continued exerting their influence on him to the side of joining the revolution, and initial steps were taken to make military preparations afoot under the Raja's orders. At last when the Chaibasa Sepoys, hopeless of the dispositions of the Porahat Raja and urged on by messengers from Thakur Bishwanath Sahi and Madhab Singh Jamadar, leaders of movement at Ranchi, revolted on the 3rd September and were moving with treasures and convicts towards Ranchi on the 5th, they were stopped on the bank of a swollen river (Sangai), a little to the west of Chaibasa by a band of 500 to 600 Kols, who would not let them go, until a messenger from Raja Arjun Singh took the Sepoys (100 men) with treasures to Chakradharpur, the headquarters of the Raja, where they were detained by the latter[2].

Meanwhile, Captain Sissmore had been removed from his post by the Government of Bengal in consequence of his 'unnecessarily' abandoning the station

[1] Deposition of Maudhab before the Court Martial at Ranchi on the 26th September, 1857.

[2] Halliday's Minute, dated 30th September, 1858.

and Lt. Birch had been appointed in his room^[1]. On the 13th September, Lt. Birch reached Seraikela, and the next move he made was a demonstration against Porahat with the forces of Seraikela Raja, which he had to abandon, intelligence having reached him that Raja Arjun Singh had re-armed the Sepoys, Juggoo Diwan had been sent with a force to Ajoodhia, and arrows had been circulated among the Kols to resist the British troops as defensive measures. Lt. Birch now directed his force to Chaibasa and occupied that station on the 16th September. The Raja was again in doubt, and he made protestations to the Senior Assistant Commissioner through his messengers and letters avowing his loyalty to the British Government and showing his inclination to move towards Chaibasa to meet the Senior Assistant Commissioner. However, the mischief-mongers were active at Chaibasa and among them some of the deadly enemies of the Raja, such as the Seraikela chief who was then playing the protector of the English in Kolhan, and on the Raja's not presenting himself in person before Lt. Birch, he was on the 23rd proclaimed a rebel, a reward of Rs. 1,000 was offered for his apprehension and his State was confiscated. Afraid of Lt. Birch's intentions, Arjun Singh still having faith in the much-boasted equity and justice of the British Government, decided to proceed to Ranchi to the Commissioner to whom he would make over the treasure and the Sepoys, and then return to Chaibasa, and intimated the Senior Assistant Commissioner of this on the 25th September, two days after he had been proclaimed a rebel ^[2]. On the 11th October he reached Ranchi with the treasures and Sepoys, all guarded by Kol bowmen,

[1] Halliday's Minute dated 30th September, 1858.

[2] Arzi from Arjun Singh dated 21st Asin, 1265, F. S.

and surrendered to Captain Davies who had been sent with a strong force to receive him, '100 mutineers as prisoners, 100 stand of arms, a considerable quantity of ammunitions and a sum of Rs. 19,578-8-9' [1].

However, this conspicuous service rendered by Arjun Singh earned for him no quarters from the British Government. His non-submission to Lt. Birch at Chaibasa was considered an affront to the British officialdom, and the Raja was directed by the Commissioner to go 'to Chybassah as a suppliant' [2]. Up to this time Raja Arjun Singh was loyal to the British Government for the men and messages so far sent by Bishwanath Sahi requesting him to join the rebellion and send the prisoner Sepoys to him had produced no effect on him. Referring to this part of the unfortunate Raja's career, Colonel Dalton observes, "If there be still room to doubt in regard to his loyalty, I have only to reflect on Lt. Birch's unguarded position at Chybassah up to the 10th October, 1857, and to compare what Urjoon Singh with his influence in Singhbhum and the force at his absolute disposal, might have done, with what he did do to acquit him of all hostile or treasonable intention [3]."

Returning towards Singhbhum, Arjun Singh heard of the death of his only child to whom he was much attached, and this together with the ill-treatment that was accorded to him by the British Government in lieu of his loyal services added with a sense of sin for betraying the patriots in their enemy's hands made him realise his follies and hardened his heart

[1] Commissioner's report dated 30th September, 1859.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

to openly join the Revolution. On his return, he removed his ladies from Chakradharpur to Porahat, leaving the former under Jaggoo Diwan, and refused to receive messengers from the British officials directing one of them to "tell the 'Sahibs' that they were prepared to fight"[1]. Preparations for the ensuing struggle were made to start and numerous blacksmiths were employed to prepare cannon balls for Raja's ordnance[2]. Juggoo in the meantime expelled the police *chauki* which had been established at Chakradharpur by the Senior Assistant Commissioner during Raja's absence. Three days after this incident, that is, on the 20th October, the Senior Assistant Commissioner attacked Chakradharpur, occupied the town, captured Jaggoo Diwan and hanged him. (It is significant to note that this Jaggoo Diwan together with Raja's father Achet Singh had been charged with complicity with the Kol insurgents 25 years earlier.) The next day the same force attempted to surprise the Raja at Porahat, but after some resistance the Raja escaped with his men, his palace and the adjoining villages were plundered and burnt by the British troops.

"Up to this period", observes Colonel Dalton, "He (Arjun Singh) had probably not quite made up his mind to rebel, but driven from his house and his property seized he and his followers appear to have flung themselves headlong into revolt." Fifteen days after the attack occurred the murder of a man who had made himself obnoxious in consequence of his having acted as a spy and guide to the expedition under Lt. Birch. The next incident was 'an offensive

[1] Chotanagpur Commissioner's letter to Government of Bengal, dated the 30th September, 1859.

[2] Deposition of Gנגadhur before the Senior Assistant Commissioner, Singhbhum, dated the 21st March, 1859.

movement of the rebels'. 'The Thakur of Kera had joined the Senior Assistant and was therefore marked out as the first object of vengeance.' His house and the adjoining *Bazar* were attacked, plundered and burned by a large force under Kunwar Byjenath Singh, Ruggoo Deo, etc. The force then marched to Ajoodhia. It was reported that on the 24th December, 1857, the insurgents under Byjenath Singh were assembled there 2,000 strong. On the advance of a party of Sikhs under Captain Hale and the forces of Seraikella Raja from Chaibasa with Mr. Lushington, the officiating Commissioner of Burdwan, who had been appointed Special Commissioner for the suppression of mutiny in Singhbhum and Manbhum, they retired [1]. Soon they attacked and destroyed the Jyuntgurh Police-station, "which was a signal for an outbreak in the southern Colehan"[2]. The British forces that had attacked Ajoodhia were unable to follow them up, and the South Kolhan was now in open revolt and Chaibasa itself threatened.

On the 14th January, 1858, the Commissioner, accompanied by the Senior Assistant Commissioner together with Sikh forces under Captain Hale went out to attack a place called Bar Bir. When they were returning to the station after the attack they were informed of the presence of a body of hostile Kols in the immediate neighbourhood. "An attack was at once decided. Advancing to the bank of the Mogra river they were opposed by a small body of insurgents, whom they easily dispersed, and having destroyed the village, they were on their back by a different route when, on crossing the deep bed of

[1] Halliday's Minute, 30th September, 1858.

[2] Letter from Commissioner of Chotanagpur to Government of Bengal, dated 23rd the July, 1859.

a dry *nala* they found it swarming with the enemy, who, thus ambushed, attacked them suddenly with a shower of arrows. Not an officer escaped unhurt. Captain Hale, commanding the Sikhs, was wounded in four places, Lieutenant Birch's arm was pinned to his side by an arrow, whilst Mr. Lushington and Dr. Hayes, the only others present were also, though less severely, wounded. . . . The insurgent Kols pursued the party for a distance of 7 miles, but were kept in check by the steady behaviour of the unwounded men, who protected the rear, and the station (Chaibasa) was reached without further casualty [1]. The Raja of Seraikella who had been left with 300 matchlockmen in occupation of Chakradharpur by the British was driven out of it by the insurgents. The British force that was later directed against the southern Kols was attacked by Arjun Singh's party and suffered severely [2]. The whole of Singhbhum was in open arms and the British Government for the second time had completely vanished from that region. On the arrival of Sekhawati Battalion and a body of 100 Europeans, the Porahat insurgents were dispersed, the *rayots* submitted and the insurgent chiefs took refuge in the hills. The Kols of the southern parts also submitted on a force marching through their country [3]. The Europeans were stationed at Chakradharpur and affairs remained pretty tranquil till 26th March, 1858, when an 'audacious planned attack' was made on the place by force estimated at 2,000 under Byjenath Singh. The British version is that the rebels were repulsed during the attack [4]. The Commissioner, however, admits that

[1] Halliday's Minute, 30th September, 1858.

[2] Bengal Judicial Department proceedings, dated the 27 October, 1859 (No. 167).

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

the country continued in a very disturbed state and another attack was made (on Chakradharpur) on the 10th June, 1858, by a force under Ruggoo Deo. According to a letter written by Byjenath Singh to Arjun Singh, dated 20th Jeth, 1265 (16th June, 1858) and the deposition of witness Greedhar Mahto before the Senior Assistant Commissioner on the 28th August, 1858, the rebel forces, after their repulse from Chakradharpur in March, under Raja Arjun Singh's order, collected at Jumroo four miles west of Chakradharpur and from there marched on to Chakradharpur on the 10th June. During this attack, Byjenath Singh reported to the Raja that he had killed six Europeans and 1 horse and the remaining six fled. "On this occasion," writes the Commissioner in his letter dated the 30th September, 1859, "the force employed by the rebels were very large. The Chakradharpur encampment was surrounded by a vast ring of armed Coles, but they were beaten off without loss on our side, followed and driven from Jumroo."

After this affair the headquarters of the insurgents retired to Porahat, remained there holding the post, and exerting their influence in the whole Kolhan area till July next when a force operating under the Commissioner of Chotanagpur compelled them after incessant fighting to retire into the Hills. The British troops could not follow them up and hence was obliged to leave them undisturbed till November, 1858. During this period they continued making occasional irruptions into the British occupied portions and harass the British troops by night attacks and other guerilla tactics. During this month also a force under Byjenath Singh and Ruggoo attacked Anandpur and drove out the Zamindar of that place (another stooge of the British Government in Singhbhum)

and got supplies which they were then greatly in need of, as the British had cut off the means of procuring these from any other direction. Byjenath Singh and Ruggoo Deo remained detached from Arjun Singh all December and part of January. They, however, from their different posts continued to harass the authorities and oppose the British troops operating against them under the Commissioner and Senior Assistant Commissioner supported by reinforcements from the Government which by this time had become able to concentrate their energies on Singhbhum. Lt. Birch attacked Kordiham, the retreat of the Raja during this period on the 29th January, and occupied it capturing there large quantity of arms, ammunition, cash and correspondence belonging to the insurgents, but the Raja and his men escaped. They showed no inclination to surrender, although the time allowed by Queen's declaration also expired. At last the Commissioner adopted a clever device to capture Arjun Singh and his party. Arjun Singh's father-in-law, the Raja of Mayurbhanj was prevailed upon by the Commissioner to exert his influence on Arjun Singh. At this time he had come to the conclusion that his cause was hopeless and was thinking of taking refuge with Odunt Sahi, a Sunbhalpur Rebel leader, in Udaypur; yet, though the Commissioner was then making use of his father-in-law 'to induce him to come in and giving him every encouragement to do so,' from his correspondence it appears as if he would sooner do anything than surrender. The Commissioner ordered Lt. Birch with the detachment of Naval Brigade and *pykes* of the neighbouring Raja to take a position in front of the Commissioner's camp at a place called Kalonkela, feeling sure that when pressed by Lt. Birch's party, the ex-Rajah who was then hiding almost without followers would be glad to surrender

to his father-in-law. On the 10th, some of the insurgents surrendered, and this was followed by the capture of Byjenath Singh, the Rajah's brother. On the 15th February, 1859, Raja submitted himself to his father-in-law who surrendered him to the Commissioner. Ruggoo and Sham Karan, however, continued showing hostility. Referring to the tribal people of Singhbhum the Commissioner writes in his letter, dated 26th June, 1861, "Amongst the former are some of the characters in Singhbhum who have not to this day submitted, and who, on the appearance recently in that district of Rughoo Deo and Shamkaran with a band of Sambhalpur rebels at once joined them and recommenced a course of plunder, incendiarism.[1] It is apparent that at Singhbhum the revolutionary fire, which had forced Arjun Singh to assume leadership in the anti-British crusade of 1857-59 had not wholly extinguished till as late as the middle of 1861.

Before referring to the ultimate fate of Raja Arjun Singh and his brother, a few words about the documents recovered from his places of retreat by British officers operating against him will prove interesting. These are letters, a few on papers but larger number on palm-leaves, purported to have been written or received by Arjun Singh while he was in open war against the British Government during 1857-59. It appears from these letters that Arjun Singh from his retreat urged his brother and Raghoo to collect men and to attack British posts and plunder. He addressed letters to Kuar Singh and other revolutionary leaders, and, according to what he writes to his followers, is in communication with them and expects that a large force will be sent to his assistance.

[1] Bengal Judicial Department proceedings of August, 1861. (Nos. 224-30.)

He succeeded thus in causing a very universal belief amongst the people of his country that large force was to enter Singhbhum to place him on the *Gaddi*. He was at the same time in receipt of anonymous letters from Deonath Shai, a cousin of Thakur Bishwanath Shai, who was hanged on the charge of rebellion at Ranchi, giving him intelligence, not always correct, as to the position of the British in India and also in the adjoining districts. These letters were written in reply to Arjun Singh's letters. All these leave little doubt that the movement of 1857—59 in Bihar was a well concerted move, and that almost in all parts of Bihar—even in as distant a region as Singhbhum, it was conducted by the local leaders in the name of their common leader Babu Kuar Singh of Jagdishpur.

After the apprehension of the Porahat Raja and his brother, the Commissioner of Chotanagpur asked the Government of Bengal about the mode of the trial of these leaders. The Commissioner was ordered to submit a full report of the case after investigation. The investigation was made *ex-parte* by Lt. Birch, Senior Assistant Commissioner, under Captain Dalton's order. In submitting his final report on the 30th September, 1859, the Commissioner observed that although Arjun Singh was guilty of waging war against the British Government for delivering up the arms and prisoners to the Commissioner, his and his brother's life should be spared, but they should be banished out of Singhbhum and kept wheresoever under restraint. One acre of the confiscated Estate should never be restored to them, and that they should be debarred from setting foot in the Singhbhum District. It is well known that the Singhbhum Raja spent the rest of his life at Banaras as a political exile.

CHAPTER XI

THE BOGTAS OF PALAMAU—LILAMBAR AND PITAMBAR SAHI.

In Palamau^[1] district the movement of 1857, although started a little late, proved very serious for the Company. The population of this area was chiefly composed of the Cheroes and Kharwars. The Kharwars were divided into several classes, the chief of these being the Bogtas. The Bogtas under the leadership of Pitambar and Lilambar, two of their chiefs with others of the Kharwar clan and a body of the Cheroes, organised themselves into a very large force. They attacked Chainpur on the 21st October, 1857, but they were opposed there very strongly by its proprietor Thakur Raghubar Dayal Singh who was 'devoted to the interest of the British Government'. The allied forces then marched to Shahpur where they took possession of 4 guns belonging to its *rais*, and overpowered the police in the local *thana*. Next day 500 of them proceeded to Lesligunj, from where the police and the artillery establishment fled away. About 300 of those who had revolted in Shahabad were now marching into Palamau district. Soon Lt. Graham, Junior Assistant Commissioner and J. S. Davies, Senior Assistant Commissioner, were sent to Palamau with considerable force consisting of detachment of Ramgarh infantry and Sikh forces under Captain Nation. But the allies were not disconcerted. On the 26th November, Joodhar Singh with about 900 followers reached Untari to the north-west of

[1] Palamau was then a subdivision of the district of Lohardagga comprising both Ranchi and Palamau districts of today.

Palamau district. 'By the end of November the whole country (Palamau) appeared to be up in arms and Lt. Graham with his small party was shut up and besieged in the house of Raghubar Dayal Singh [1]. On the 29th November a large body of Bogtas attacked the station of the Coal Company at Rajhara (10 miles north of Daltonganj). On the 2nd December the insurgents attacked the *thanas* of Manka and Chattarpur.

A body of troops under Major Collier was ordered to proceed from Sasaram to the relief of Major Graham, and they captured Debi Bux Rai, one of the principal leaders in that area. But the movement continued unabated. With additional reinforcement from the Raja of Deo and *Sarbarakar* of Sirguja, Lt. Graham defeated Premanand, *Illakadar* of Kunda and most influential leader of the Kharwar tribe, and reached Lesliganj on the 26th December. Although the affairs appeared to have taken a favourable turn for the Company, Pitambar and Lilambar were still active and were trying to strengthen themselves by enlistment of more men to their side. They were joined by a party from Mirzapur side and carried on a sort of *guerilla* warfare for some months from January, 1858. On the 16th January, 1858, Capt. Dalton himself started for Palamau with 140 of *Sepoys*, a small party of Ramgarh Cavalry and a body of Matchlockmen under *Purganait* Jagatpal Singh. Joined by Lt. Graham on the 21st January, next morning they attacked the historic Palamau Fort which was held by the insurgents. They later presented a bold resistance but were dislodged, and they marched away in other direction. In the baggage left there by them the English officers discovered

[1] Minute of Sir F. J. Halliday, dated 30th September, 1858.

letters addressed to Lilambar, Pitambar and Nakat Manjhi by other leaders of the Movement and correspondence from Amar Singh promising immediate assistance from Kuar Singh. In fact the leaders in different parts of Bihar planned to stand and fight together.

CHAPTER XII

THE WAHABI MOVEMENT (1822—1868)

The name of Bihar, specially that of Patna, is closely associated with the so called Wahabi Movement. This movement was started by Syed Ahmed Khan of Bareilly with the object of introducing certain religious reforms among the Mussalmans of India, but in the political circumstances of the time it developed and assumed a religio-political character aiming at the destruction of British power in India. Syed Ahmed, by dint of his many natural gifts including those of oratory and power of persuasion, soon attracted a large number of followers to his creed. *Maulavi* Wilayat Ali of Patna, soon after completion of his studies at Lucknow, joined him as one of his most enthusiastic disciples, and soon his whole family including his brother Inayat Ali and father Shah Mohammad Hussain Shah, a very respectable family of Mohalla Sadikpur Patna, got initiated into Syed Ahmed's creed, when the latter visited Patna in 1822 on his return from Mecca *via* Calcutta. When Syed Ahmed left Patna, Wilayat Ali and Inayat Ali accompanied him to Rai-Bareilly where Syed Ahmed now enjoined upon his followers the practice of physical exercise and use of arms. About this time Syed Ahmed's chief disciples, *Maulavi* Mohammed Ismail and Abdul Hai, compiled the famous pamphlet *Shirat-i-Mustaqueen* or Straight Path, which preached that the first and foremost religious duty of a true Muslim was to perform *Hajrat* or flight from the country governed by the *Mushriks* or Christians. In pursuance of this doctrine Syed Ahmed with considerable number of followers including the Patna

Maulvis proceeded to Kabul. Wilayat Ali preached the Wahabi doctrine in Afganistan.

While Wilayat Ali and Inayat Ali were in Afganistan Shah Mohammad Hussain and others were busy organising the movement in Bihar and Bengal and branches were established near Rajmahal, Rajshahi, Nadia, Barh and Dacca. In 1829 Wilayat Ali was deputed to preach the doctrine in Hyderabad, Central Provinces and Bombay and Inayat Ali was deputed to carry on missionary work in Bengal. After making a number of disciples in South India, Wilayat Ali also returned to Patna to engage himself heart and soul in this part. After labouring for some years in organising the movement in Bengal and Bihar Wilayat Ali sent his brother Inayat to Sittana (North West Frontier) to look after the affairs of Wahabi camp which had by this time become the headquarters of the Wahabi movement. Inayat reached there in 1839, took full command of the Wahabi force, and for some years engaged himself in anti-British activities extending from the Punjab to Afganistan. In 1844 Wilayat Ali also left Patna with Yahia Ali and other members of his family for Afganistan. His party was detained in the Punjab and Lawrence forced them at Lahore to sell their arms and artillery. The brothers were then sent back to Patna under escort and were bound down on bail bonds of Rs. 10,000 undertaking not to leave Patna for 4 years. Notwithstanding these bonds they continued their activities defying the British Government.

In 1850 they again left for Sittana. At Delhi they were given a rousing reception and the last wearer of the Mughal Crown invited him to deliver his sermon in his presence in the Fort. From there they went to Swat where they were received cordially

by Syed Akbar Shah, chief of Swat. In the Frontier, Wilayat Ali who stood for *Hizrat* as Wahabi's political creed, was acknowledged Syed Ahmad's successor in opposition to the more extreme doctrines of those of the party who regarded *Hizrat* as a mark of cowardice and lack of faith in God and stood for immediate military action against the British Government. Wilayat Ali, however, died very soon in 1854 and Inayat Ali was proclaimed leader. Wahabi activities under Inayat Ali is mentioned in the Ravenshaw Report as follows:—

“In 1852 a treasonable correspondence was seized by the Punjab authorities which disclosed an attempt on the part of the Hindustani fanatics in the Hills to tamper with the loyalty of the 4th Regiment of the Native Infantry at Rawalpindi. The Conspiracy was found to have originated at Patna and on the letters seized mention is made of many of the members of Sadikpur family of *Maulavis* and of the *Khalifas* or the men of arms there proceeding to the Frontier.”

Hunter mentions this event in his ‘Indian Mussalmans’ [1] as follows:—

‘A skilful attempt had been made to tamper with the 4th Native Infantry stationed at Rawalpindi, conveniently near to the fanatic colony and one of the finest regiments which, on invading our province, would have been sent to act against them. The letters (written to the troops of the English)

[1] Hunter : Indian Mussalmans, p. 22.

distinctly proved that a regular organisation had been established for passing up men and arms from Bengal to the rebel camp. At the same time the Magistrate of Patna reported on the 19th August, 1852 that the rebel sect were upon the increase in that city.'

Inayat Ali was labouring hard to induce the Pathans to support him. He had succeeded in gaining sympathy of the *Akhund* of Swat and *Saiyads* of Sittana and recruiting many to his cause [1].

In the eastern portion of the Yusufzai country, Inayat captured the village Nawakela aided by the inhabitants thereof, but was soon ousted by a strong British force sent from Hoti-Mardan. A month later Inayat marched to Naringi, a village in British territory, and when British force was sent to drive the Wahabis out of the Frontier, they were utterly defeated by Inayat Ali. After a short time they made a night attack on British camp under Lt. Home at Nawakela and plundered much booty which he divided among the headmen of the hill tribes. While he was preparing for another campaign the Indian movement of 1857-59 broke out and his communications and sources of supply from Patna were entirely cut off.

During the Movement of 1857—59 the Wahabis at the Frontier kept themselves busy in stirring up a spirit of unity, but they did not take any active part in the rising. At the beginning of this movement Mr. W. Tayler, Commissioner of Patna, adopted some highly repressive measures against the Wahabi leaders of Patna whom he suspected to have organised a conspiracy against British Government in

[1] Calcutta Review, 1870, p. 398.

India. He arrested three influential *Mauvis* of Patna in a dishonourable way as already narrated.

The Wahabi settlement at Sittana was destroyed by Sir Sidney Cotton's force during the general operation that was organised against the Wahabis after the close of the Mutiny.

In 1861 the Wahabis again resumed their activities. At this time the leader was Maulavi Abdulla of Patna. In July, 1863 they boldly reoccupied Sittana, and in September they declared war against the British Government, calling upon all the good Musalmans to join the *Jehad*. The Government sent a British army of 7,000 strong under Sir Neville Chamberlain. The campaign ended unsuccessfully and Abdulla and other leaders could not be captured. At the end of the campaign there was the famous Ambala Trial in 1864. The three principal accused in this conspiracy were Jafar, Shafi and Yahia Ali. The last named person was arrested in his house at Sadikpur (Patna) by Mr. Parson, a police officer of the Punjab Government, accompanied by the Magistrate of Patna. The accused were kept in separate cells in Ambala jail. The trial ended with the three abovenamed persons being sentenced to death and 8 others for transportation of life with confiscation of property of all.

Ahmadulla, who could not be arrested along with Yahia Ali, was tried separately at Patna on the basis of evidence taken from Ambala trial. He was also punished to death by the trying court. But the Government commuted the sentence of Ahmadulla as well as the three punished to death at Ambala to transportation of life. Referring to this Hunter observes that the Government "took the wise revenge of denying even to the most treasonable of them the glory of martyrdom".

After the removal of Ahmadulla and Yahia Ali, their disciples secretly carried on the missionary work in Patna. Maulavi Mobarak Ali became the principal leader at Patna and Ibrahim Mandal and Amiruddin were his chief agents in the districts of the Santhal Parganas and Maldah respectively. The Special Department of the Government made several arrests in the Santhal Parganas. Ibrahim Mandal of Islampur and some other Wahabis were prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment for life.

Under the supervision of Amir Khan and Hasmatdad Khan, hide merchants of Collootolla, Calcutta, silver coins collected for Wahabi movement were collected, exchanged into gold *mohurs* and sent to Sittana. They were residents of Patna City and were arrested by the Special Branch Police at Calcutta without warrant. Both were sentenced to transportation for life by Patna authority and their properties confiscated. The power of Patna Wahabis was completely broken up by 1870. Yahia Ali, Ahmadulla and Amir Khan died in the Andamans. Hasmatdad Khan and Abdur Rahim of Sadikpur family were later released.

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